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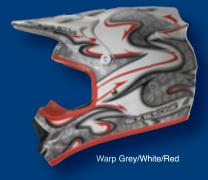






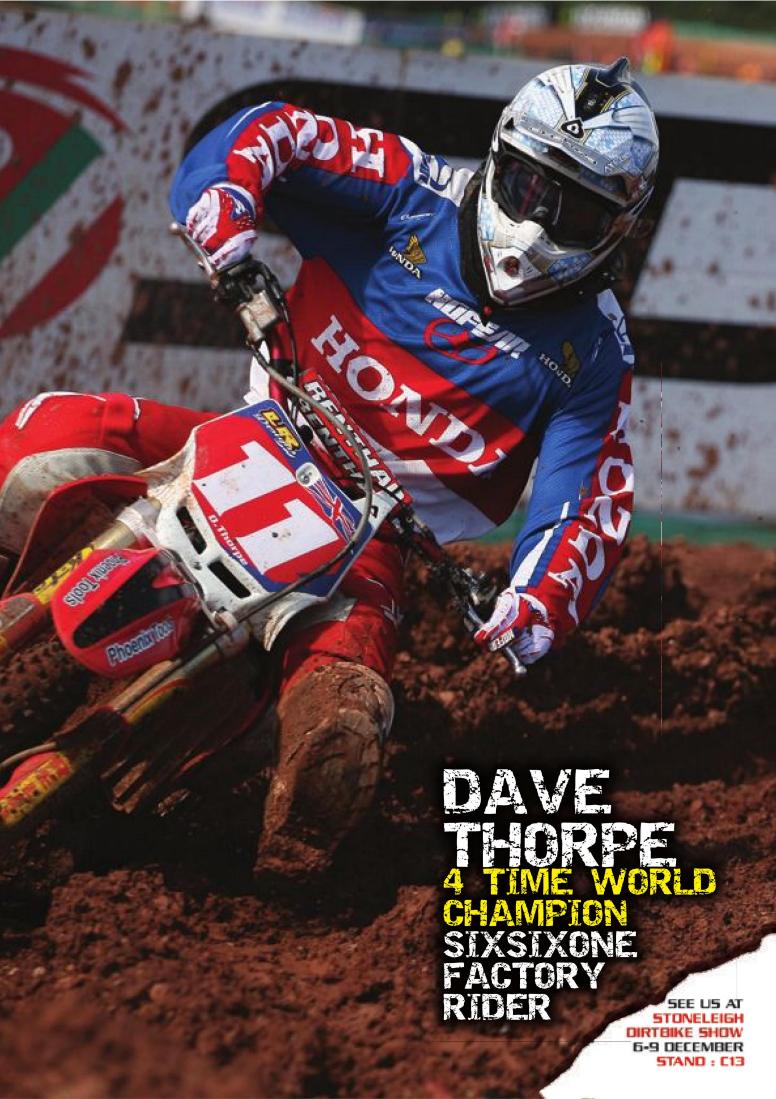












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British Masters and BYMX series come to a thrilling conclusion



COMMENT

calling me the Olympic Torch (apparently I never go out) I decided to do something about it and arranged to hook up with Swordy at his home in Hampshire for a spot of mano o mano action. And as I hadn't seen our technical editor for a little while the plan was to break the journey south with an overnight stay at Wakker's house near Marshfield and – these things being inevitable - we ended up settling down for the evening in the Lord Nelson.

As the black stuff and apple beer flowed Godfrey became increasingly animated on the subject of his impending trip to the Las Vegas Endurocross where - thanks to some hefty string pulling - he'd managed to bypass the qualifiers and swing an entry straight through to the Main Event. Now anyone who knows Geoff will be certain of one thing - the man's passionate about racing – and with his Guinness goggles and my cider visor firmly in place the conversation visited all points off-road from the tank-denting triple at Cardiff to the Romaniacs to Vegas to the Dakar Rally. And it was at this point that his rosy Oirish cheeks started to shine and his wild staring eyes really lit up.

Oh yes, the toughest off-road event on the face of the planet and Wakker's right up for it! If he can pull the funding together and secure a deal then come January 2009 Geoff will be pointing his front fender south and heading for the desert. There's no doubt that he has the skills and the bottle for the job - his epic Romaniacs performance proved that - but the biggest hurdle is putting together the package that will get him there. Matching us (well almost) pint for pint in the Nelson was Geoff's mate Rowan who came up with a cunning plan to get the machinery in place. At the moment it's all a bit hush-hush but I can say Rowan's prepared to take one - or even a few - for the team and that's exactly the kind of dedication to the cause that could just make Geoff's Dakar dream come true. Watch this space for updates on Team SR-75/DBR/Listerine...

The following morning I hit the M4 and motored across to Fleet to meet up with Haggis and when I eventually got there he looked fit and healthy and was on fine form. For a man who has lost almost two years of racing through injury Stevie was amazingly positive and raring to go After being out of the public eye for so long (his two-month comeback hardly counts) it would be easy to overlook Swordy when discussing the favourites for next season but you'd do so at your peril. Only a few years ago he dominated the domestic scene and led the world championship and I for one believe he could do it all again. Turn to page 30 for the start of our interview with him.

This month's issue also features an interview with Swordy's former nemesis Billy MacKenzie and while I was putting together the Mac piece it struck me just how unpredictable the Fickle Finger of Fate can be – one minute it's chucking you under the chin, the next it's probing your prostate and vice versa. Anyone remember Polesworth in '02 when Billy Mac lost the British title to Swordy on the final corner of the final race of the season? Stevie went on to defend the title twice while Billy consistently came up short. But this year, while Swordy was struggling with injury, Billy finally did what we all knew he was capable of and lifted the British MX1 crown.

So for 2008 let's keep those fickle fingers crossed that we see two Scottish DBR columnists topping British and world championship podiums...



THE LAST time anyone in the office saw someone on a motorbike upside down by Tower Bridge it was during a particular drunken game of The Getaway on a PS2 but now mad Aussie Joel Balchin's only gone and done it for real - and over a fleet of double-decker buses!

The crazy flipping flipper's flipping crazy flip was part of a big promo push for the forthcoming Crusty Demons Unleash Hell Tour that's due to rock up on British soil in the first couple of weeks of 2008.

With New Year dates in Manchester, London, Birmingham and Belfast, a whistle-stop series of jaw-dropping demos were arranged in all four cities with the aim of grabbing local and national media attention and driving ticket sales. So the day after his London date Joel was at it again – this time outside Manchester United's Old Trafford stadium.

While it's easy to be a little blasé about what's now become a staple trick for more or less every freestyle wannabe star, the choice of location - and the attention from the mainstream media - means that the sport is going to be shoved under the noses of people who've never even head of motocross, let alone freestyle, in homes up and down the country. And that sort of exposure is good for everyone with an interest in off-road riding.

The Crusty travelling shows have been a huge hit worldwide but this will be their first stop in Britain. Top billing in the Unleash Hell Tour goes to world #1 Nate Adams but he's by no means the stand-alone star of a show which features seven of the world's top 10 ranked riders including X-Games gold medallist Adam Jones, Blake 'Bilko' Williams and Robbie Maddison.

This tour has been in planning for over two years and now we are ready," reckons promoter Rush Sport's Michael Porra. "It will be the first time all our riders have performed in Europe together and to assemble the world's greatest riders to come to the UK and throw down their best in one place at one time will be incredible



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On the cover: Steve Ramon scored the most points in this year's MX1 world series – and that makes him champ! (Magnus Andersson) Contents: Brit MX2 champion Mike Brown tears up Glen Helen (Sutty)



FMX FRENZY

X-Fighters schedule announced

AFTER AN astounding 2007 X-Fighters world tour Red Bull have added even more stops to the 2008 edition of their chuffing amazing FMX frenzies with stops scheduled for Mexico, Brazil, Italy, Spain and the USA. That means there's obviously bad news for us Brits as both the Slane Castle event near Dublin and the rumoured London showdown have failed to materialise on the proposed schedule.

The 2008 tour will kick off in Mexico City during April in the Plaza de Toros – a venue notorious for its 42,000 crazy spectators invading the arena with drums and white bandanas to cheer on their FMX heroes. From there the tour heads to Rio de Janeiro where FMX will meet samba.

Shortly after the event comes back to Europe for the next stop in Rome. In a Gladiator-inspired FMX battle, riders will compete in the historical Circus Maximus! In June (or maybe October) the tour heads to the Forth Worth Stockyards in Texas with a rodeo themed wild west style adventure lined up.

Then for the grande finale the event returns to its home turf, the most beautiful and venerable bullring of Las Ventas in Madrid, where spectators with chainsaws and airhorns will be fired up for another crazy FMX fiesta Espanola! For more updates and information head online to www.redbullxfighters.com

NUNN HITCHED!

TENACIOUS TWO-TIME British MX2 champ Carl Nunn's been a busy boy of late saying 'I do' to both his lovely long-term fiancée Naomi and also the equally as lovely Mark Chamberlain whose Motovision Suzuki squad he'll be racing for in the British and world championships next season.

Joining existing Motovision team aces Jason Dougan and James Cottrell on the rapid MVR-D Suzukis, Carl's new grizzly looking team manager is pleased to welcome Carl to the Motovision family. "I'm pumped to have Carl on board," claims Mark. "I think it will do the team good with his experience.

"I wanted someone who Jason would get along with and I'm sure they can both bounce off each other. And having James Cottrell in the Under 21 and MX2 British is also good."

BIG BORES!

ACU get tough in battle against oversize engines

HOW IRONIC is it that the ACU should send out a press release about big bores? It seems that the stuffy suited ones have a bit of a bee in their bonnet regarding oversize engines...

The bottom line is that the ACU plan to experiment with new engine measuring equipment which will enable checks to be made without removing the cylinder head which in theory should allow unlimited testing at both national and club events.

The ACU claim that any competitor who is found to be using an oversize engine will lose their licence and any championship points gained before receiving a fine and then being named and shamed.



FIVE-TONNER STUNNER!

GORDY'S BACK ON THE TRACK BUT HIS AGING CR500'S A BIT OF A BONE-SHAKER

WORDS BY GORDON CROCKARD

TONIGHT IS Halloween and I'd much rather be out in the dark letting off monster rockets but instead I'm in my wee cosy office letting off monster farts due to the high intake of spinach and broccoli earlier for my tea. As an observant man once said, 'you can't hold what you haven't got in your hand'!

The rest of me is a bit of a hygiene disaster I'm only just noticing now too as I've not showered yet after being out in the muck all day with a bunch of young hopefuls at one of the Red Bull junior assist programmes. It was down at Tandragee and the ground was wet but by the afternoon the conditions were perfecto. I'm back there again tomorrow for more schooling so I'll maybe not bother washing as I'm only going to get rotten again. Only joking! My mum would be mortified if she thought I was going to do that. Saying that, Laurence Spence once told me that only dirty people need to wash. Yeah, nice!

Now that I'm a bit older than I used to be (note – as if there's any other way human aging goes) I'm having to be clean and tidy on more serious occasions each year. Like the sad tale of many of my friends, another one has gone and fell victim to marriage. Yes, young Lawrence Hugh Scott has crashed and burned and I among other clean, showered and broccoli fart free friends were in attendance on his wedding day to see Scott tie the knot. More importantly we were all there to witness the best man's speech when a tape was played of Scottie singing solo during his days in the choir. It was, as Visa would say, priceless...

Speaking of prices, I've been doing my best to avoid hagglers beating me down on price as I'm having a clear-out bonanza of cars, campers, trials bikes, soap, deodorant, broccoli, wedding cake, choir singing lessons etc etc. I hate the whole nonsense of negotiating prices. 'How much is it?' 'Okay, what would you take for it?' I mean, come on! The answer to both should be the same should it not? But I got my cars sold and now just the camper to go.

My last trip in the camper will be this weekend when I hop on the P&O ferry across to Bonnie Scotland and drive her down to Sheffield for the Future West supercross. I'll be on my PAR Homes 450 Honda and up against some handy competition from what I see in the proposed line-up. I was third last year and would obviously love to repeat or better that result. I've been out of racing recovering from my shoulder and head injury for three months now so I'm eager to see the startgate again.

Last week I tested my skills of old by taking part in an Irish championship MX on a 1996 CR500 steel framed two-stroke Honda. I wanted a bit of craic and also to start riding again as I have some supercross events to do this month. All was going good and I holeshot the first moto and led the race. It was a 25-minute plus two laps moto and with three laps to go my

ding-ding-a-ring-ting-ting-dinger let me down. She was bottoming out too often and that broke the subframe allowing the seat to fall off. So I finished second on the pegs and was thankful for the track time.

Moto two started with a broken subframe as my tool box seemed to be missing a welder and this time all the wobbling about due to the break made the brackets break on my exhaust. So a huge hole formed in the front pipe and I finished the race again in second. My friend and sponsor Gavin Boyd was helping spin the spanners all day and anyone looking would see him working on my bike and assume he's my mechanic. So his reputation as a mechanic to any onlookers isn't exactly a good one as my bike fell apart in both races. Sorry pal, you get the blame!

Before returning to bikes I naturally had to go through an adrenalin rush rehabilitation programme. I hooked up with the trials men and joined them for winter training on the mountain bikes one Monday night. The nights are pitch black so lights are essential for cross-country trails. But not in my case as I figured I'd be good without lights just by following them. So the adrenalin certainly flowed and I probably rode through endless piles of dog crap.

Next was some water activity in Justin Reid's RIB (rigid inflatable boat). Now I learnt years ago never, ever to get in or on anything that has an engine and a Justin Reid but like I said I was on a buzz-seeking rehab course so if danger and thrills were involved then Reid was the answer! We went over to Port Patrick in Scotland and after-dinner activities carried on a bit past dark so our return journey was pretty memorable.

No sidecar race or anything daft for me at Weston this year but I did phone Knighter on the Saturday night to wish him luck. I was surprised to find out he wasn't doing it in a form of self-preservation for his USA GNCC championship mission the following weekend. Quite right too I reckon and he did go on to win the series. Fair play big man – awesome job!

This may come a bit too close to the mark for some people but the England rugby team should consider selecting Knighter for their squad in the next world cup. He weighs in at over 16 stone, has size 13 feet and clearly is a tight lad if he can win three-hour races in super-hot weather in America. On the night of the world cup final I was out in a very atmospheric bar glued to the screens just like everyone else. I rang and joked with Paul Cooper whether he was supporting the green team or the white team. Karl Prestwood got the same stick too, just for the banter. My old spanner supremo Nick Moores was in no mood for fun or Mickey taking as he loves rugby and is very passionate about the England team. Hard luck but at least you beat the Paddys!





SWIFT SIGNINGS

IT'S ALL change for 2008 for Swift Suzuki with flying Frenchman Pascal Leuret joining former Fork Rent rider Jake Nicholls aboard RM-Z250s and Brad Anderson jumping ship from Pioneer Yamaha to campaign a RM-Z450. The trio will join forces with existing Swift Suzuki rider Elliot Banks-Browne.

"I'm delighted to be able to announce our '08 line-up," says team boss and former GP star Mark Banks. "Pascal is a solid performer and his podium in Portugal this year was just a glimpse of things to come. Brad on the other hand will launch us into MX1 with the potential to go for race wins from the outset on the new RM-Z450.

"I truly believe we have a fantastic mix of experience, talent and youthful enthusiasm giving us a very real chance of championship glory next year."

DOUGIE CHAMPKIN!

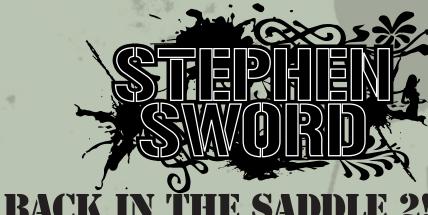
DOUGIE LAMPKIN is the man on form at this year's Scott Trial. The former world champion sets standard time – a rapid four hours, 53 minutes - and parts with just 20 marks on observation to come home 19 marks clear of seven-time winner Graham Jarvis.

Billed as the toughest one-day event of its kind in the world, just to finish the event is an achievement - especially as riders have only 150 minutes after the first man home to complete the event. This year just 85 out of 200 starters make it home including Katy Sunter who becomes the first female to manage this feat twice.

'That was fast, maybe too fast," reckons Doug. "It is just so dry out there that you are really tramping. I really wouldn't have wanted to go any faster than that. When I was riding up Faggergill between the sections I was thinking how hard this must be for the clubmen. I rode up on the pegs but I knew they'd be carrying the bike.

Crossing the line in 15th is DBR's very own trials tester Dan Clark. "Eee, that were reet tough - have you got me invoice yet?" said Dan at the end. "The sump guard's nice and flat and blah, blah, blah...





GETTING READY FOR HIS SECOND MAJOR COMEBACK. WORDS BY STEPHEN SWORD PHOTO BY RAY ARCHER

THIS MONTH has been a good one and very busy for me as I'm off the crutches and walking well again. A couple of weeks ago I started riding for the first time since Namur - the fact that I had a brand new practice bike staring me in the face every time I went into the garage was enough to give me itchy feet. The weather's been pretty good down here so the conditions have helped me ease my way into riding again.

I feel good and all things are going in a positive direction. I will continue to ride in November and December along with physical training with DT. It's going to be hard work but I feel I will cope okay. I'm still having physio every week to help get more strength and stability in my ankle. In my head I've put the injuries and

the last two seasons behind me - there's nothing I can do to change that now but I can work hard all winter and come out fighting next year!

I don't see there being any problems. Molson Kawasaki have been working very hard and I'm pleased to be part of their team for '08. I'll also be continuing with Fox Racing for 2008 - they are a great company to be involved with and their kit is pretty awesome too - and next season will be my eighth with Oakley goggles so, like I said, everything is looking positive.

I've been busy around the house again. I had 270 square metres of turf to lay in my garden. I'm no Alan

Titchmarsh but there was no way I was going to pay someone to do it after some of the quotes I got. It took me a couple of days to finish and I reckon it looks pretty good. I've been rolling it a couple of times a week but I've yet to give it a first cut - next time you see me at the startline preparing my rut don't be surprised to see me with a roller and my gardening tools!

Anyway, enough of that - let's talk about the real stuff. Golf! TC held a golf day recently for all the people and sponsors who have helped him over the year. I apologise if TC didn't invite you - he left me sweating for a while saying I wasn't a sponsor. I mentioned all those years I looked after him and cleaned up after him

(remember the chicken chow mein?) when I stayed at Marshfield and the fact that it was me who got him started on golf in the first place! Finally he relented and let me come. About 20 people turned up so we were split into groups and I had the pleasure of playing with Dale from Six Six One and Thorpey. It was a great course, great day out, nice meal in the evening and I had my best result of the year with a third overall! You can imagine what it was like on the first tee with everyone watching and trying to put you off. I managed to send mine straight down the middle but I'm glad they didn't all see my second shot. Fantastic day TC and I can't wait for you to sort it out next year.

I had to attend a Fox day that was being held

at Albion Motorcycles in Exeter. Basically, Albion are a Fox dealer and they were having an open day with all the '08 kit on display. I know Gary and his family from when I rode Albion KTM in 2002 and 2003. I only ever went to his shop in Exmouth and his new shop is much bigger and better. There was a good turn out and it was cool for me to meet up with some old faces I haven't seen for a while.

I also had a flying visit from the editor this week. Yep, Mr SL popped in for a coffee and a chat. He was nursing a sore head after a night drinking with Mr Rich Tea (Geoff Walker). It was good to see him looking super fit. I didn't have any Rich

Teas so he had to settle for Hob Nobs instead.

Over the next weeks I have a few schoolboy club presentations to attend. I can't say who as they told me to keep it quiet but I'm looking forward to them

As soon as I've finished this column Jodie and I are flying off to Dubai for a week in the sun. Our last holiday was two years ago due to the injuries I've had and we're both pretty excited and looking forward to it. And as soon as we're back I'll be getting down to the serious business of getting ready for next season...

Catch ya later!





















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LOOKING FORWARD!

THE '07 SEASON IS OVER AND WAYNE GARRETT IS THE NEW KING OF IRISH MX BUT WITH THE '08 MXDN TO PLAN FOR THERE'S LITTLE TIME TO REFLECT ON A GREAT YEAR OF RACING...

FINALLY, THE 2007 Irish motocross season is done and dusted! October 20 marked the final round of the Irish championships run on the jump-filled Tandragee circuit which was impeccably prepared by John Sinton. Who would have believed it? 'Tandragee in October?' was the cry when the date and venue were released but against the odds the hardpack circuit has never been in better shape to serve up arguably one of the best days racing of 2008.

Added spice came in the form of Gordon Crockard who it must be said was in fine tune and turned up on a 1996 Honda CR500. "It was fun to ride the 500 but unfortunately the poor thing was not up for racing, it was disintegrating beneath me," quipped Gordon who still managed second overall on an 11-year-old bike! I guess it's official – there is no

real substitute for talent! While leading race one GC's five-tonner was shaking itself to pieces and with only three laps remaining the seat flew off, leaving him little option other than to ride 'trials style' for the remainder of the race. The multi-time British champion could be heard laughing as he crossed the finish line to applause worthy of a GP win.

Garrett enjoyed his two wins in MX1 and GC was second overall but the biggest smile in the paddock on the day belonged to Mike Sinton. The main focus going into the final round had been the battle for the number two position in the MX1 class with no less than five riders having a mathematical chance to cement a podium finish. Two points separated the newly-signed Moto-One teamster Dave McCamley who has stepped it up since turning orange from GOMX/Russell's Honda's Sinton. But it was Sinton who threw caution to the wind and stamped his authority on the series silver medal on his home circuit, recording two third place finishes. "Third in the Ulster and second in the Irish read as if 2007 has been my best ever season but the reality is that I have had a tough year," admits Mike. "My team told me to forget about championship points today and just race my bike - which I did. Luckily enough it worked out well.'

In the MX2 championship it was a Garrett brothers one-two in the final points table as AJ Elite KTM campaigner Jason rode injured at Tandragee to protect his runner-up position. Third place on the rostrum and racing with a broken thumb, Luke Wilde riding his Dave Wilde 'tweaked' Suzuki scored points in every race this season – well done to the Wilde Team.

Congratulations must go to Wayne Garrett on claiming all four Ulster and Irish titles aboard his Phil McCullough-prepared Moto-One KTMs. Wayne's corner speed was incredible at Tandragee and he hammered home that fact by storming through the MX2 pack after a mid-air collision on lap one with teenage team-mate Graeme Irwin which resulted in Wayne remounting some 20 seconds behind last place. With all four championships already secured, Garrett blasted his way back into second position behind Irwin.

The Seven Towers club ran a sterling event at the Moneyglass GP circuit for the final Ulster championship outing of the year. Near on 300 riders congregated to do battle including Wulfsport rider Shaun Simpson who made a rare appearance as did Martin Barr and this – coupled with the Seven Towers' promotions team – resulted in one of the best

gathering of spectators seen at a Ulster championship meeting in a hell of a long time. Shaun was awesome, coming from behind after hitting the startgate in race one to win in the premier division on his 250F against the best of the big bike riders. Fellow GP regular Barr simply had no answer to the Scot in the first moto and then a crash second time out meant it was not the most successful of days for the Yamaha rider.

On the subject of our home boy by now I'm sure that you'll all be aware that contrary to media speculation (er, last month's Blarney? – SL) and press releases Martin has not signed for Wulfsport KTM. Yes, the Larne-based racer had talked to the team as he did several other teams which approached him with offers for the forthcoming season. Blarney spoke to Martin and this is what he had to say on the matter...



"I firmly believe that with Steve Dixon's team I retain the best opportunity to capitalise on the progress I have made this year. To change teams and machinery at this important crossroads in my career could be detrimental to securing my future goals. Through my management team we have clarified my position regarding recent unsubstantiated media speculation on my position for 2008. I wish to thank you all for your support and am delighted to remain with Bike-it Dixon Yamaha."

Moneyglass is for sure a world class circuit. It way not have the natural hills of Desertmartin and it's a tall order indeed to measure up to Porter's Pit but I for one am over the moon that we have a GP standard track with hard-standing paddock that mere mortals can race on. Yes, there were issues with the Moneyglass GP in 2007 and the world MX media will be bearing down on us next year come September 28 as for the first time Ireland will host the MXdN. We better get it right.

Ireland's hospitality is legendary worldwide – as is our reputation for in-fighting. We need to pull together now, put our differences aside and make the 2008 des Nations the greatest show on earth.

Stevie





Leading the race to victory!



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THE US GNCC CHAMPIONSHIP HE CAN WELL AND TRULY CLASS HIMSELF AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S OFF-ROAD ELITE

FINALLY, AFTER what has been one of the most hard-fought championships of his professional career, David Knight has been crowned '07 US Grand National Cross Country champion.

Like all great champions Knighter never believed he'd do anything other than win the '07 US GNCC series. Confident that he had what it took to follow in Juha Salminen's footsteps and beat the Americans at their own game, DK overcame injury and disappointment as well as having to adjust to a new team and race series to prove himself in no uncertain terms this season.

Starting America's largest off-road racing series with a hand injury that severely disrupted his pre-season training, David took to the start of the GNCC championship under-prepared and nowhere near as race ready as he needed to be. Miraculously though at the opening event, which many riders consider the toughest of the series, he came through with flying colours finishing second to former champ Shane Watts. Things were looking good for the new boy.

From that event on DK's season rollercoasted from good to bad and everything in between. Just five days after his podium result at round one

he failed to finish round two. All of a sudden things weren't looking quite so rosy for the Manxman. Then David decided to revert back to a four-stroke, the bike he felt most comfortable on and the bike that in hindsight he probably ought to have started the championship on.

Round three should have seen David claim his first win of the season but instead it was the starting point of what would become a frustrating year in which he would repeatedly take one step backwards no sooner than he took two steps forward. While leading the race his fuel tank vent hose jammed which resulted in David finishing fifth instead of first.

Finally at round four David claimed the first of what would be seven wins. Repeating his podium topping result at round five. DK looked to be on his way. But at

round six the two forward steps he'd taken were followed by a fourth place result, another backwards step. Just like at round three another 'stupid' mechanical problem stopped him from winning. Six rounds into the championship and David had suffered mechanical glitches in one third of the events held so far.

Rounds seven and eight saw David move to the top of the points standings and with the championship's two-month summer break just around the corner delivered his mid-season knock-out blow. Arguably one of the most important events of the championship, David claimed the series' biggest ever winning margin. Finishing 10 minutes ahead of his nearest rival, David showed that he was ready to wrap up his first GNCC title just as soon as he could.

But once again things didn't go smoothly for David as the championship reconvened at the start of September. Again leading a race Knight saw victory go begging as a split radiator hose resulted in his bike seizing which forced him to push it across the finish line. With just four races remaining the pressure was on as time was fast running out for David to take control of the championship.

Round 10 went well but sure enough good was once again followed by bad as round 11 saw him finish eighth having slept just one hour before the race after competing in - and winning - an indoor Endurocross event the night before the GNCC. With the end of the championship in sight - and with several of his rivals believing that they had the two-time Enduro 3 world champion on the ropes - David remained calm, won the penultimate round of the series and in following it up with victory at the 13th and final race of the season to claim his first ever US GNCC championship.

In winning the '07 US GNCC championship David proved a number of



things. Firstly, he showed that he is truly one of the world's elite off-road performers and joins Australia's Shane Watts and Finland's Juha Salminen as one of just three riders to claim the WEC, ISDE and GNCC championship winning hat-trick. Secondly, he proved that when it comes to woods racing European riders are, without a doubt, the best in the world. Thirdly and most importantly he showed that despite numerous set-backs, disappointments and problems he wanted the '07 US GNCC title more than any of his championship rivals.

And that, after all, is what makes David Knight one of the world's off-road elite.





GOT SOMETHING TO SAY? WELL HERE'S WHERE YOU SHOULD BE SAYING IT...

Write to Rant at the usual address or email us at rant@dirtbikerider.co.uk All letters/emails must be accompanied by a full address. Oh and please don't send emails all in capitals. Cheers!

I A DA WADARSANA NY DIPENA DIS

Write to Rant, get your letter published and you'll win a one-litre trigger bottle of marvellous bike cleaning fluid Muc-Off. And if we rate your letter highly enough you'll also receive our monthly star prize - this month a pair of camo Etnies Cinch shoes.





SAM'S STORY!

I felt I should write to you having just read Alex Hodgkinson's Eurovision article in the November edition. While the overall review of riders is not in dispute I feel that the record should be set straight regarding his comments on Sam Davis. As Alex rightly says Sam did not gain points at the Bulgarian race but there's a good reason why.

The week before the Bulgarian race, Sam was one of very few UK riders to compete in the Honest International in Sweden and then the following week attempt to make it to Bulgaria. The tight schedule and the fact that the ACU cancelled transport at the last minute meant that Sam had to cadge a lift with only sufficient space for one race bike. In race one Sam's triple clamps snapped which left him 2000 miles from home with no spares or any means of recovering the day.

I think Sam's plight is a good example of our riders trying to compete on an uneven playing field. One only needs to look around international events to see other EU countries' national motorcycle federations total commitment to their riders with transport, accommodation, GP rider mentoring and of course machinery and spares.

One can only hope that the ACU takes our youth riders more seriously and stops this half-hearted effort before they leave the sport for jetskiing or representing Luxembourg! Jason, Gloucestershire

Cheers for filling us in on what really went down in Sevlievo Jason.

BELL CRISIS!

I was recently sunning myself on a hot beach in Cyprus scrutinising your great magazine when I noticed what appears to be a push bike bell on the handlebars of Jake Weimer's bike - do you know what it is? Is it a new bit of bling I can buy for my pride and joy?

Jason, Hampshire

You could try your local Halfords, apparently they've got Barbie and Thunderbirds branded bicycle bells for less than four quid.

GRAPHICS CRISIS!

Hi guys this is a bit random but I remember a while back you had a long-term CRF450 test bike with custom floral style graphics on it. I don't suppose you have the contact details for the company who made those graphics for you and/or a picture of that test bike?

Max, via email

It was Tom at Blink MX - www.blinkmx.com who made the graphics and they were a top notch bit of kit too - by far the easiest to fit backgrounds we've ever worked with. Give him a call on 01487 842377 and he'll be able to tell you everything you need to know.

GIRLFRIEND CRISIS!

I've been riding dirt bikes now for about two months and I've caught the bug big style and practice as much as I can. My trouble is trying to get my missus to come and support me – all my mates have their girlfriends come down to the track but not mine! She supports me but is worried about me doing it and she won't come to the track. Any ideas how I can entice her?

Steve, West Sussex

Tell her you're taking her for a fancy meal, go riding for a few hours on the way and then take her to the Drive Thru on the way home. It never fails to work. Love Sutty (who's single)...

ASS-WHOOPING ANDY!

What's happening? You managed to do a full detailed report on the Motocross des Nations yet our youth team goes and kicks ass in the FIM Youth World Championship and we don't even get a write up or any pics! This should be a front page big up for you and your sister publication - TMX - so shame on you! Well done to all those involved for bringing home the goods!

Andy, Yorkshire

Good point well made. Well done to our boys in Bulgaria - Steven Clarke, Max Anstie and Sam Davis.

GOGGLE CRISIS!

What's the best way to stop my roll-off films from sticking to my lens when it's raining? Chuck, Bury

Fishing wire is the only sure fire way of stopping your roll-off film from sticking when it's wet. Head online to the Walker's World section at dirtbikerider.com to find out how!

CRISIS CRISIS!

I'm a 34-year-old male, happily living with my girlfriend of three years with our two Basset hound dogs and on the whole life's just great. But without realising it the dreaded midlife crisis has come and reared its ugly head!

I've just bought a KTM 250EXC from a friend who races MX without even seeing the bike! This has enforced that I was in full swing of my crisis much to my girlfriend's amusement. Then next stop the crash helmet, boots, trousers, jersey, pads and of course everything else AMS in Tewkesbury had in their shop for me to buy.

"All new with no clue," was my friend's greeting to me on my first outing.

I started the bike and rode up his farm track. In my excited state I thought I was a teenager again but my bike knew I was an older person. Using the throttle in an expert way - well in my head anyway - I tried a little jump and proceeded to go head over heals bringing my head, back, legs and everything else in contact with the ground.

Seven weeks later and I'm still recuperating, only able to move my arm a few inches - still enough to read DBR – with my collarbone sticking out at a strange angle. I now have better respect for my bike and more importantly realise I've had a midlife crisis but will still keep my biking dream alive with weekly training sessions with someone who can show me how to be a teenager again.

Thanks for producing a great magazine and helping me keep my young spirit alive!

Martyn, Bristol0



It's little wonder you broke your collarbone doing jumps when you've got a riding style like that. You need to get your elbows up and grip with your knees. And at 34 you're far, far, far too young to be having a midlife crisis - give it another decade or so!



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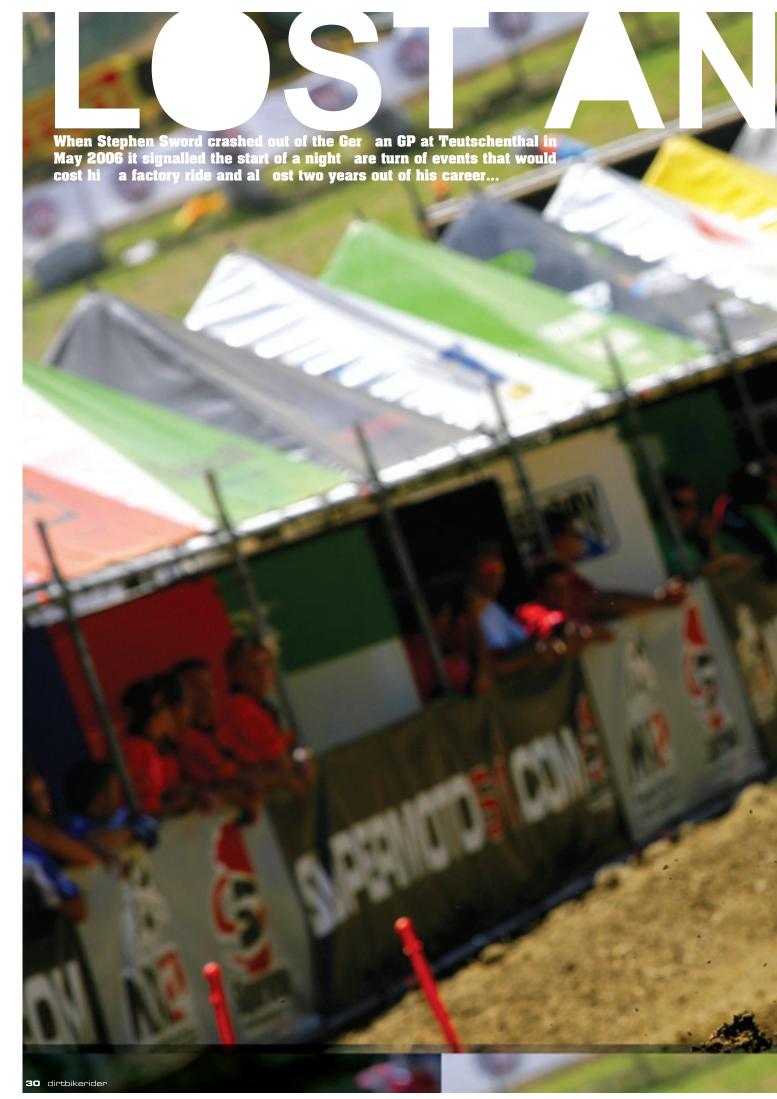


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the man on the street Stephen Sword appears to have everything. Good looks, a big swanky house on an exclusive estate, a flash motor and a stunning model girlfriend. But appearances are deceptive. Cut away the trappings of MX stardom and the laidback Scot with a West Country accent has a big hole in his life, a hole big enough to swallow almost two complete seasons.

"This is it, we're not moving again," he tells me as I'm steered past his girlfriend Jodie Oram into an immaculate designer kitchen. Looking trim and fit, the only clue to the almost career-ending nightmare that started for the 27-year-old at Teutschenthal in Germany back in May '06 is a slight limp. "I feel I've lost two years of my racing career. It's always nice to have the factory ride but losing that doesn't bother me because I believe in my own ability and I believe I can get back to where I was before."

Not too long ago Swordy could do very little wrong on a motocross bike. Back-to-back British supercross titles, three British 125cc/MX2 crowns on the bounce, GP wins, the red world championship leader's plate, a Dutch MX2 title, a factory Kawasaki ride and a high-profile switch to MX1. Then it all came to a horrible, bone-splintering halt at the 2006 German GP.

'Teutschenthal has a tabletop in the middle of the track that has a real sharp take-off and on the second-from-last lap of practice on the Sunday morning I came out of the corner before it, the throttle just wound open and it sent me so high. I stayed with the bike right until the last minute and then jumped off and tried to land on my feet but I think I just landed on the one foot and the full impact went through my heel."

The crash left Swordy with a broken tibia and fibula and smashed his right heel to pieces. It also nearly cost him his career, probably lost him his factory ride and put him out of action for almost 14 months. It was the beginning of a long, hard fight - physical and mental back to full health. And it would stand him in good stead when, less than two months into his comeback, he sustained another season-screwing injury. But let's rewind back to Germany or, more accurately, the aftermath.

'That was a big injury. I remember the crash but I can't remember much of going to hospital because they knocked me out and I'm glad that they did because I've never had pain like that before. They operated on me in Germany but they couldn't do anything because I don't think they knew what to do really. They were specialists in those external fixators so they put one of those on I think to just then make a decision what they were going to do.

"I wasn't keen on staying there so I moved back to Belgium where I got Dr Claes and he's done me ever since then. Dr Claes told me it was a big injury and that I'd have restricted movement but that the main aim was to get it so I could ride a bike again and that's exactly what he's done. I probably won't run again but with swimming and cycling there are ways round that."

Fourth in the world in 2004, the following year he was just eight points off the lead as the series approached the halfway mark when a hand injury effectively ended his title challenge. Then for 2006 he was given the chance to stay with Jan De Groot's factory Kawasaki team and move up a division to MX1.

The season got off to a faltering start when he sat out the Hawkstone International with a thumb injury but he gritted his teeth and just missed a podium finish at the opening British championship round of the year at Lyng. Then came round two at Canada Heights and Swordy dominated on the 450F with a pair of clear race wins but he was lucky to even make the start.



Positive mental attitude

"One of the positives I look at is that every year since '97 I won a championship of some kind right up until I injured myself. I won the under 21s in '97, '98 and '99, I won two supercross titles in 2000 and 2001 and three British championship titles and then the Dutch title so I always had some success every year. I still believe I had a good shot at the British championship in 2006 so I always had goals and I'm not ready to stop, I still feel I've got unfinished business.

"I want to prove to everyone and to myself that I can go out and win GPs. It's not going to be easy but it wasn't easy before - I know what needs to be done and I think I'm fitter mentally and physically than I was before.

"I haven't got a whole lot of years left. I think I'm in the middle of my career and I think I've got a good five years left and I'm just going to give it all I've got and get back into the mindset I had when I was winning GPs because I've beaten all these guys before. I'm going to do my work and get my head down. Everything's in place for me. Obviously, injuries are there for everyone but I feel as though I've had all my injuries now.

Antonio Cairoli

"I've been watching Cairoli all year, studying him and seeing how he's changed from when I raced him in 2005. The confidence that's coming out of him is unbelievable. I think if he's put under pressure it would be a different ball game. But no-one's really got close enough to put him under pressure.

"But I still think he can be beaten - whether it's me or not I can't tell you that now but I know what I'm going to do to try and get up there with him at least. He's definitely going to be the one to beat. He's a crowd favourite and exciting to watch but at the same time he's only got two arms and two legs. He's going to be hard to beat but I need to do all I can to put myself in a position to be near him to force him to make mistakes. No-one's really done that this year."

Tommy Searle

"Tommy's obviously going to have a lot more experience than he had this year and he's a good rider. I've never really raced with Tommy because when he moved into MX2 I went MX1 but I've watched him as well. He seems to ride better in GPs than he does at the British where there are a lot of guys who give him a hard time.

"At GPs he seems to get good starts and really get his head down and get on with it. It's normally the opposite, it's normally British riders go better at home and they struggle at GPs. But Tommy seems to excel when he rides GPs and that's a good thing to have. He's going to be up there for sure. I can see weaknesses in him - everybody has their weaknesses - and you just have to pick up on these things."

Support

"I've got great friends around me. Jodie's kept my head sane through a lot of it. Nothing's a problem for her. She didn't care if I didn't get back on a bike again, she just wanted to see me get better. And Tim [Elverson] who I've known for years was so positive, so were my family and Fox have been great.

"When I started training again I felt I needed someone else to push me, to keep me on track. I've worked with Dave [Thorpe] before so I knew what he was like. I've always been friends with him and by me going back training with him he's given me so much positivity. Some days when I first started training I really couldn't walk but I gritted my

teeth and did everything.
"We went cycling and swimming and he was great, he
kept telling me when things were going good. When I told him I needed another operation he just said "no problem Steve, get the operation done and start again" and that's how it went and we just built up and built up."



"Last year - it seems years ago but it was only last year - even at the beginning of the season I had a couple of niggling injuries. I missed the Hawkstone International because I'd done the ligaments in my thumb and then the week leading up to Canada Heights - and to this day I still don't know how I rode the way I did at Canada Heights - I had a big crash down at Tonymoto and hurt my neck and back and it was agony.

"I went to a chiropractor and got it checked out and he said he thought I'd pulled my back and picked up some bad bruising. I'd actually chipped a bone in my back but didn't find that out until after my injury in Germany. So up until the German thing I always had something that wasn't quite right. But things were going okay and progressing quite well and then Germany finished me off."

Germany really did finish Swordy off, killing his '06 season dead in the water and after complications slowed his recovery ensuring he would miss the start of the '07 campaign as well. It was the beginning of a personal dark night of the soul that would see him come close to hitting rock bottom.

"Since that day it's been real complex - I've had something like 10 operations and an infection set in so all the plates had to come out, I had to have a bone graft, I had to have tendons cut on my toes. And that was just trying to get the injury fixed - there was also the psychological thing, the fear of the unknown because I didn't know what my foot was going to be like or even if I was going to ride again because in Germany they said I might not be able to."

While he was propped up on the couch at home and in and out of hospital the world kept turning and Steve could only watch helplessly as his rivals got faster and his factory ride disappeared into the hands of old foe Billy MacKenzie. But instead of giving in to self-pity and despair Swordy forced himself to be positive and in doing so began to turn things around.

'You get your head around it and I've become a stronger person - I've had to come through a lot. There's always someone worse off but for me at the time I didn't know what was going to happen. I was being sick because of the infection, I lost two stone, it was never-ending...but then you slowly get better. I read a lot of books that I would have never imagined picking up on

how you can visualise the healing and I used to do it every night, visualising the good blood cells cleaning out the infection and the bone healing together - things like that to give me a little hope.

"I've been lucky that people have wanted me as well. I wasn't going to sign for Jan again because he'd already signed MacKenzie - he was probably under pressure and in doubt whether I was going to be riding again so you can't blame him for that - and then I had a couple of bloody good offers as if I'd had a real good season so I was lucky in that sense that I didn't have to worry about whether I was going to get on a good bike in a good team."

One of those bloody good offers came from Molson Kawasaki – to all intents and purposes the same team Swordy had kicked off his pro career with a decade ago. Back then they were the fledgling Holt/JCB Kawasaki but over the years have grown - along with their former star signing – into big players in the MXGP paddock. Signing for Molson meant dropping down to MX2 again but it was a move that suited - and still suits - Swordy.

"I liked the 450 but I thought about all my options and the position I was in at the time and it felt as though the Molson route was spot on and I was right. They're good people, I trust them, I know who I'm working with, I know what they expect from me and I know they're behind me with everything so that was probably one of the big reasons I returned to MX2. And I've had a lot of my success in MX2 and at the moment I'm probably a lot more confident in MX2 so it makes sense to go back to what I'm confident with and worry about going back up at a later date.

"It's kinda what Gundersen did. I don't think it's any easier - if you're giving it 100 per cent it should never be easy - but I'm definitely staying MX2. I've got a bloody good deal, good bikes, good set-up and my head's in the right place.

Molson Kawasaki is very much a family affair, overseen by Marshfield's Church dynasty. Lisa Church is team manager, her brother Tom rides for them and the whole operation is fuelled by the passion of their parents Mike and Paula. The family has always been close to Swordy and they showed a loyalty towards their struggling new signing that's becoming increasingly rare in the





cut-throat world of professional motocross.

"Molson were great. They were expecting me to rock up at Valkenswaard at the first GP and then my bone didn't heal right so I had to have a bone graft. They said 'just get your foot ready – we're not bothered if you don't come back until June, July, August' and it was bloody good to hear that."

Steve's first race was at Hawkstone Park in June at a round of the British Masters. While he wasn't challenging for a podium it was clear that the fire was still in his belly, even if the fitness and race skills were playing catch-up.

"I didn't expect to come back and set the world on fire and I'd have been wrong to think that I could come in and pick it up where I left off. I was in that mindset where I'd just start off gradually. I worked really hard every week and things were going really well. The British championship I was aiming for top 10s and I got there and Whitby was better than Desertmartin.

"All right, at the first GP I didn't qualify but at the second I got some points and at the third GP I had a fourth overall. I'd say it was quite a lucky fourth — I didn't score high — but I wasn't too worried and what was better for me was that I felt really good on the bike and right back in there. It was a big step and I came away from there thinking 'now it's time to pull the trigger'."

And pull the trigger he did – unfortunately, he shot himself in the foot...

"And then I went to Namur, hit a haybale on the way down the hill and that was it. I knew I'd broken something in my foot and although I knew it wasn't to do with the old injury I was devastated. I went down to the medic centre for an x-ray and I was kinda half expecting them to say 'yeah, you've cracked it' and they said I'd broken three metatarsals and a bit just below the big toe and would need it pinned.

"When he said that I couldn't believe I'd have to go through it all again. I just went back to the van and basically bawled my eyes out. I wasn't worried about the injury, it was the fact that things were going well and I couldn't show everyone what was to come. I really liked Namur and I liked all the races that were coming up and the way the championship was panning out there was a nice gap there for me to have a good go at.

"Dr Claes had come to watch and didn't even see me

ride. He went straight down to the medical centre, saw the x-ray and said 'right, you need it pinned'. I arranged there and then to go on the Wednesday and went straight home."

That was at the start of August and the good news is that Swordy's now back in the saddle, preparing for 2008 and relishing the prospect of reasserting himself as one of the world's best MX2 pilots.

"I started last week for the first time since Namur. I probably left it a bit longer than I could have because there was no rush to get back riding so I made sure everything was fine. I had a lot of physio first and did a bit more training and last week when the weather was good I decided it was time. And I got on fine, I didn't find it difficult at all.

"Before, when I came back from my last injury, it felt like a whole new thing getting on a bike again but this time it's only been like eight or nine weeks so I didn't really feel that uneasy with the bike and got into it straight away. So I'm going to ride a bit in November and December whereas I would normally stop then because I'd have ridden the whole year. But I've a got a bit of a plan where I'm going to try and ride a couple of days a week and keep up the training with Thorpey which we start on November 5 and I'll go through until a couple of days before Christmas when I'll have two weeks off before starting again on the second or third of January.

"So I'm looking at next year now. My ankle will get better each month so I'll just get my head down, keep working away, try and forget what's gone on last year and this year and try to get back to where I was before. What's good is that I've got the whole winter whereas this year I started riding mid-season and trying to get onto people's pace and get your fitness up mid-season is not easy.

"Although I haven't ridden for a bit I'll be able to catch up a lot – everyone's on zero now, they've got to start again. My speed and fitness were almost there when I came back, it's just that you miss the racing. Everything comes really fast for you when you're not used to it.

"We worked a lot on the speed for the first few laps and that was coming so with the whole winter ahead I don't see why I can't catch up. And I'm really looking forward to it – I can't wait until February!"















When you've seen the very best racing Europe has to offer and you wanna see so ething fresh you've gotta pack your bags and hit the road...

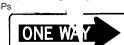
ho do you call when you break down on the M6 on your way to Heathrow Airport just hours before you're due to jump on a jet and fly to America? The answer is everybody, especially when it's 11 o'clock on a Friday night and you only know people who are likely to be legless at said time.

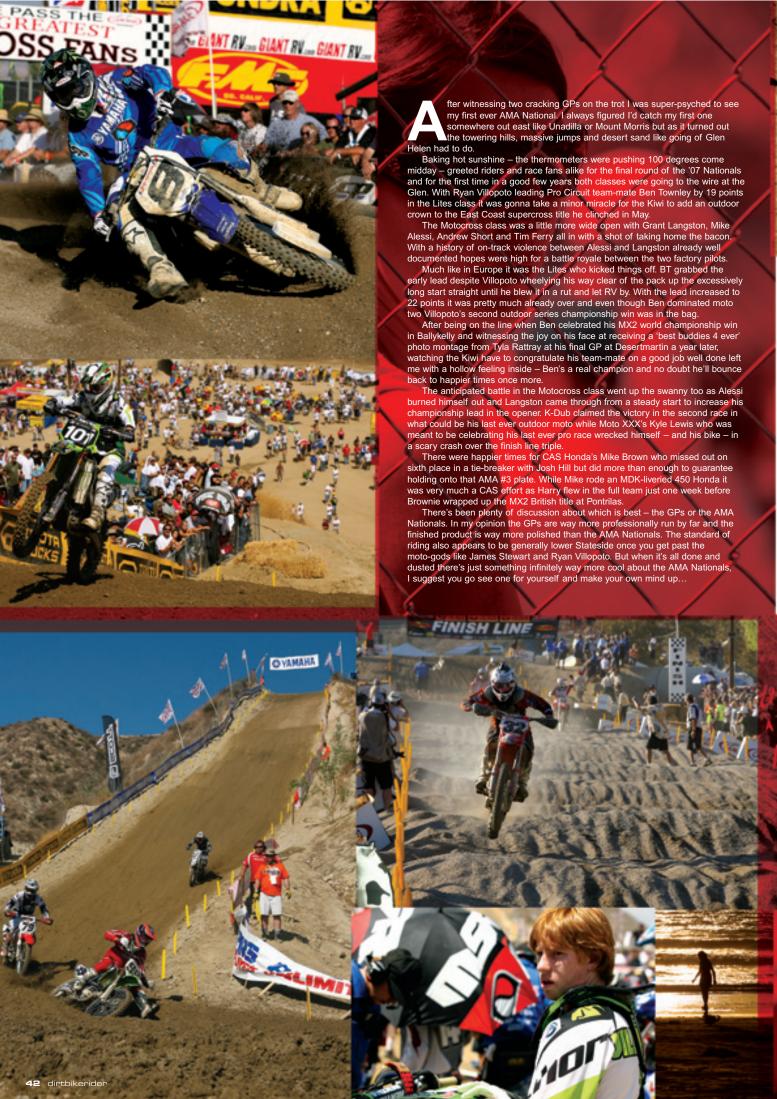
After calling and texting the people who are most likely to help out a friend in need it turns out that the one person who I expected to be the most incapacitated (and his slinky girlfriend Christina - grrrrrrrowl) came to the rescue. Cheers Marge, you're a superstar - but what's with the shorts? It's almost like I got you out of bed or something...ah, right! So with Christina's Suzuki Ignis fully loaded - like the star of the Herbie movie of the same name - with bags and bodies it was back to base to try again...

So three hours and a hundred quid later I'm right back where I started, spending 75 quid on almost as many litres of diesel and, screw it, a packet of liquorice Allsorts at Lancaster's premier service station. So in truth it's three hours, 10 minutes and £177.09 later before I'm back where I started. But this time I have a fully functional van, a full tank of diesel, a very expensive pack of liquorice and an open road.

The road is my friend - an open road especially so - because it takes me away from the office and on lots of dirt bike related adventures. During the past few weekends it has taken me to Moneyglass for the Irish GP, Donington for the British GP, to the pub - I spent that weekend lost in a bottle of Magners - and now I'm on my way to Heathrow to fly to the land of the free. I won't be flying of course, the aeroplane does all that, I'll just be sat there. Once there the plan is to take in the last round of the US Nationals, a few days at MX Heaven then road trip to the big daddy of 'em all, the one event that takes the best of both worlds - that's the GPs

and the US Nationals - and blends 'em together to create the hermaphrodite of our sport, the Motocross des Nations...







nless you've been keeping your finger somewhere safe and well away from the pulse you should know what MX Heaven is. If you haven't and you don't here's a quick overview... MX Heaven is Southern California's premier training and vacation facility catering for both professional and amateur enthusiasts.

The facility is run by the Swedish Ambassador Stefan Elvin – an ex-pro racer who figured that long winters in Sweden sucked and that California was the place he ought to be so he packed up his trunk and he moved to Perris.

Since Stefan started with his MX training camps in the late '90s he and his facility have come a long, long way. Moving from a small house with a garage in the white picket fence world of suburbia, MX Heaven is now a full-on moto-complex that features a massive workshop, AMA-standard supercross track, techniques practice area, bike wash bays, laundry room and an attached bungalow that can house up to 30 riders at a push. But it's much more than just a bad ass facility and it's the service you get from Stefan and his team that makes MX Heaven, heaven.

As well as top notch surroundings and an ever-attentive workforce, MX Heaven has a complete range of almost new – mostly '08 model – bikes to choose from for all ages for visitors to their Ride Trips, making it very possible for fathers and sons to ride side by side at famous Californian tracks such as Glen Helen, Competitive Edge, Cahuilla Creek and Perris Raceway. In fact, while I was there Roland Wikblom and his son Jonas were doing just that with Jonas trying his

best to chase down his dad all week long.

Other Ride Trip guests included Gavin Young who's been travelling to California for his moto fix since the mid '80s. Now a very successful businessman in his early forties, Gavin still finds time to live the American dream – in between making conference calls back to the UK – and the ex-Vintage Iron world champ still hauls ass for an old 'un (especially in the corners)!

Also on the Ride Trip were Ulster C-Grade rider MK – who saved my flight from being boring – and English boyos Jez and Franklyn, Pickup, John and Phill – who also had a brand new pair of Alpinestars Tech-10s for the trip – and a handful of Swedish guys whose airline lost their luggage meaning they couldn't ride or change their undies for a day or so. Gutted!

As well as riding Ride Trip guests can expect to get behind closed door tours of Pro Circuit and Troy Lee Designs – I met both Mitch Payton and Troy Lee – as well as the chance to shop at major motocross superstores like Chaparral Racing and 74 Motosports and stalk supercross celebrities like Ryan Villopoto who looked most pleased when we rocked up at his doorstep.

MX Heaven also runs a college programme where foreign students such as English riders Richie Leech, Greg Fisher and Jason Varnham can study motocross while continuing their education. The programme mostly suits riders who are looking to make a long term commitment to the sport and don't mind moving away from their mommas and poppas – look out for more on the MX Heaven college programme in a future issue of DBR.







ou can't start a road trip without something freaky happening first and the day before I was due to drive the MX Heaven rig from Perris, California, to Budds Creek, Maryland, for the Swedish MXdN team to pit out of with all-round good guy Dave Aleman and Swedish journalist Jonas Hagren it happened...

For some reason my leg looked even more sausage like than normal and with the prospect of a four-day drive cross country in store I figured now was the time to get it checked out properly so I headed to the ER department at Menifee with Stefan's dad Bjorn. Unlike in the UK where A+E would be chocker with drunken tools sporting alcohol-fuelled Friday night fighting and falling injuries the Californian equivalent was not. The queues were still the same though...

After waiting five hours to finally get sent for an x-ray my leg was so swollen that the doctor refused to believe it wasn't broken. An x-ray proved it wasn't but a blood test showed I had a dose of Cellulitis – a quite serious bacterial infection but nothing that couldn't be fixed with a course of antibiotics. After a swift drive to the local 24-hour pharmacy – God Bless America! – it was back to base for a few hours sleep before heading up the road.

After nodding off on my bunk I was woken what felt like five seconds later by Jonas. "We're late," he claimed. "Dave is here already." And indeed there was no denying that Dave was in fact there so I jumped in the shower, gelled up my hair, brushed my teeth, downed some drugs and hit the road to Maryland.

Day one of the drive was a dull one. As soon as you climb out of the San Bernardino Valley and up past Competitive Edge motocross park in Hesperia there's not much to see apart from desert, rocks and the smoke from a forest fire that was devastating the area of Big Bear. After stopping for fuel and breakfast (mmm Chinese foooood) at Barstow, the drive was simple – follow the I-40 east for the next three days or so then recheck the map.

Dave drove six hours and I drove four before Dave drove another four and we ended up around 80 miles short of Albuquerque in New Mexico after completely clearing California and Arizona before calling it quits for the day.

The next morning I enjoyed one of the world's best showers at the Truck Stop. Just 10 bucks buys you a freshly cleaned cubicle, warm fluffy towels and a shower that's so hot and powerful that it's possible to stay in there for hours. There was no time for breakfast by the time I'd dried off and done my hair so it was straight back in the cab. Dave drove for six hours then I did the same as we passed through the panhandle of Texas blowing by a row of half-buried Cadillacs somewhere near Amarillo and on into Oklahoma with the cruise control set to 75. By the time I'd slept right through Dave's second shift behind the wheel we were somewhere near Littleport in

Arkansas which is where we bedded down for the night.

The next morning's shower cost another 10 dollars although it was nowhere near as nice as the previous day's. The countryside is much nicer out here and the locals much hickier – gosh, darn, dang! After fruit, water and drugs for breakfast it was back on the I-40 headed towards Tennessee. Finding a non-country station on the radio was increasingly awkward although as we crossed the Mississippi into the home of 'the blues' the Marc Cohn classic Walking in Memphis blared out through the speakers – freaky or what.

Luokily we weren't actually walking as the Ford-powered truck was still trucking along nicely, taking us past the countrified city of Knoxville and into West Virginia – possibly the prettiest state in the whole of America. After finally finding somewhere to park that night – somewhere with free Wi-Fi no less – it was noticeable just how much cooler the evening air was although it was very much still ideal for shorts and a t-shirt.

Today was the day we originally thought we were gonna meet the Swedish des Nations team but Stefan was still being a bit evasive about where and when – bad Stefan – so we ambled on at a more sedate pace through Virginia. As we passed through some of the best countryside I'd seen so far on the particular trip (Austria and Romania still kill it) I tried to remember the lyrics to Country Road so I would know just what it was I was looking at. I figured Dave might know so I asked him and we spent the next few miles humming and trying to figure it out – apparently the answers were Blue Ridge Mountains and Shenandoah (just like the moody waitress from Chili's) River.

That night we stayed at the Flying J truck stop where the lower ambient air temperature meant there was a definite nip in the air. With this stop being on one of the main routes between New York and the south it was a wee bit more ghettotastic and less countrified and hickified than normal.

The next day was spent doing nowt except driving around looking for a truck wash before sitting down and watching Quentin Tarantino's Death Proof which would get at least nine thumbs up if it were to appear in a Dawg's DVD Decathlon!

It was sunny when I woke up the next morning. After a shower and breakfast at the truckstop we got the truck rewashed – there were too many splattered bugs on it for Dave's liking – before heading to Waldorf and the Holiday Inn where most of the teams including the Swedes and the Brits were staying. Dave expected to be busy prepping bikes for the Swedes all day but their idea of prepping a bike for the world's biggest race didn't meet his expectations so after they'd fitted their own suspension and pipes they headed off to run their bikes in and get a little practice. From there Dave and I headed to the Budds Creek circuit to get the rig set up...







fter levelling the truck and jump starting the generator I wandered off to get my entry sorted for the amateur supercross that was due to run alongside the MXdN as a Friday and Saturday night sideshow. Originally the plan was to also get a 20-minute practice session on the freshly-prepped MXdN racetrack too – sweet. I filled in the forms for an AMA licence then handed over 50 bones entrance fee so I could race in the Plus 30 class on the KTM450 I bijacked from MX Heaven. There were already a bunch of race fans wandering around KTM450 I hijacked from MX Heaven. There were already a bunch of race fans wandering around soaking up the pre-event atmosphere – plenty of Brits too. Sweet!

The Swedes arrived back with glum faces – their fastest rider Jonas Wing had washed out

the front end in a slow corner and popped out his shoulder. Luckily they had a reserve rider ready to step up if Jonas' wing was too sore to race on Saturday. Aside from talk trash with the other Brits there wasn't much more to do other than hang around and wait for Friday morning practice on the big track.

That never happened though. Even though amateur riders had come from right around the world for their chance to ride the same track that Ricky and co would be ripping up the organisers pulled the plug and said there would be no riding on t'big track for us AMA amateurs. Balls. With many of the racers having spent an absolute fortune to get to and stay at the track there were more than a few pissed off racers just about ready to carry out some redneck fury on the event promoters and the facility itself.

So before the place was burnt to the ground supercross practice was announced for two o'clock to try and wear out the blood thirsty throng. While the track was small and the biggest jump was about 30 feet the track was surprisingly fun to ride when dry and a slippery nightmare when watered. With classes for everyone from kids to quads there was plenty for the ever increasing amount of race fans converging on Budds.

By Friday night the place was packed and as the first motos of the amateur supercross were ready to leave the line the place was buzzing. Row two of race four was when I was due to do battle and I rolled up just in time to catch the end of the national anthem that seems to start every major sporting event on the west siiiide of the Atlantic.

At amateur level the Yanks don't run a 30/five second board, instead preferring to use a two/one minute board thing which is a tad confusing for us Brits abroad. Regardless of any confusion I nailed the holey anyway and schooled the Over 30 Yanks in how to ride supercross while pulling out a comfortable lead which I held until the motor died over a small double three corners from the chequered flag. Even with the electric start whirring the motor over it took about 30 seconds before it fired again – shooting flames out of the exhaust before it did – and I set off again in fifth, recapturing fourth in the final corner.

Losing the moto win was a bit of a gutter as I was hoping to be the first Brit in history to win an AMA-sanctioned supercross but winning an overall with a 4-1 wasn't out of the question if I could've just bounced back and won moto two the next evening. Later that night both Steven Clarke and Edward Allingham aced their classes so at least some Brits were keeping it lit right to the finish.

The next morning saw the on-track action we'd all come to see begin with MX1 practice kicking things off nice and early. The des Nations is always a funny event as although each country is claimed to have sent their best three riders there are always some top stars missing from the entry list either due to injury or a complete lack of want to represent their country and then there are the complete wobblers from Eastern Europe and South America.

In practice it was blatantly obvious that the Yanks were on it with the three ginners standing out head and shoulders above the Euros, Africans, Asians, South Americans, Canucks and Australasians. In fact, during practice only the AMA regulars Ben Townley, chunky Chad Reed and Grant Langston looked close to being near the pace of Carmichael, Villopoto and Ferry.

Britain's chances of a podium position were blown when Noble badly hurt his shoulder early in the Open qualifying session. But thanks to the brilliant fifth from Tommy and eighth from Billy the British team transferred to the main races with ease. Good job really as there must have been upwards of 5,000 British fans in attendance who'd have been majorly fed up with no Brits to cheer on the next day! It actually surprised me just how many Brit fans were ONE WAY - most of them wearing Union Jacks with pride.















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AFTER SEEMINGLY sitting static for longer than I can care to remember Husqvarna have rehashed and revamped their TC model four-stroke motocross machines and released something that looks well worth owning and riding for 2008.

Slimmer, lighter and lower than in years gone by, the '08s also look smarter and racier with brand new plastics and fuel tanks fitted to an all-new oval and box section semi-perimeter design frame.

The new frame offers a completely new ergonomics package that sees the footpegs sitting 15mm further forward than on previous models to improve the rider's weight distribution. A new subframe contributes towards the 10mm seat height reduction which is another positive move.

The subframe also carries a new airbox and boot that offers a more direct air intake from the

filter to the carburettor – increasing efficiency – which is made possible by the offset fitment of a new Sachs shock absorber. As well as moving back to Sachs rear suspension units to replace the Ohlins shocks fitted in '07, the TC250 now runs the far superior top of the range 50mm Marzocchi front forks that the 450 had this year – an all-round positive move by the company who were bought out by the BMW bigwigs earlier this year.

Of course BMW have long been known for producing flash looking motors and that'd be a fairly good description of the powerplants fitted to the '08 TCs. With new black coloured crankcases and red cam covers the engines look super trick as does the titanium exhaust system that runs to the left-hand side of the bike — there'll be definitely no mistaking these bikes out on the track.

That'd be true in normal circumstance at least but I didn't notice that at all.

but for the '08 model launch – held in a German bog just north of Munich – it was so muddy that it was hard to tell just which bike was which underneath all that glorious mud.

But if they're not caked in brown stuff you can't help but notice how damn slim they are when you first jump on them. The two-stroke Huskys have been skinnier than even the scrawniest of supermodels since Y2K but the thumpers have been infinitely more bus like — until now. I felt in real danger of losing the TC250 up my crack when I first sat on it but luckily the Tommaselli fat bars gave me something to hold myself steady with and all was okay.

The seating position feels very neutral – dare I say more Japanese than ever before? – and all the controls are just in the right place. I thought the bike might feel strange with the exhaust being on the opposite side to what I'm used to but I didn't notice that at all.









SPECIFICATIONS

TC250

Capacity: 249.5cc
Bore and stroke: 76mm x 55mm
Transmission: Five-speed
Carburettor: Keihin FCR-MX 37mm

Front suspension: Marzocchi USD 50mm

(300mm travel)

Rear suspension: Sachs (296mm travel)
Front brake: 260mm disc
Rear brake: 240mm disc
Wheelbase: 1495mm
Seat height: 968mm

Dry weight: 100kg

TC450

Capacity: 449cc

Bore and stroke: 97mm x 60.76mm
Transmission: Five-speed
Carburettor: Keihin FCR-MX 41mm
Front suspension: Marzocchi USD 50mm

(300mm travel)

Rear suspension: Sachs (296mm travel)

Front brake: 260mm disc

Rear brake: 240mm disc Wheelbase: 1495mm Seat height: 968mm Dry weight: 104.5kg

One thing I did struggle with was the kickstart lever. I don't know if I found it a problem because I'm so short or it's down to the angle of the lever itself but I felt like my boot always wanted to slip off it – add a little mud and it felt 10 times worse.

Once the motor was running the bike sounded great but out on the track felt relatively tame – there is no hard hit and the power delivery can best be described as smooth.

The riding position is good and the bike handles well pretty much everywhere. The new TC250 sits lower in the rear than the older models and this makes it feel so much better balanced. The '07 Huskys had the habit of pushing away from underneath me in turns but the new bike turns much more positively which helps increase your confidence and decrease your lap times.

The suspension feels a little on the soft side but I think that's probably because the bike

probably weighed twice as much with all the mud it was carrying.

Everything else on the bike is pretty sweet. The Pirelli MT32 tyres are excellent and work well in a wide range of conditions, while the Brembo brakes are probably the best brake systems that money can buy and offer an amazing progressive feel at the lever and outstanding braking performance at the wheel.

As a complete package the bike is generally a good one although it is a little lacking in the motor department which could be a problem in a class where sheer horsepower helps win titles.

Now 450s generally have an abundance of power and rideability is the key to success with the MX1 class missiles and this is one area in which Husqvarna have improved their bike significantly. Like its kid brother the TC450 has an all-new chassis which really brings the bike alive and makes it much more fun to ride than past 450 Huskys of years gone by.

Aside from the extra power the 450 feels quite like the 250, sharing the same sweet riding position, controls, brakes, clutch and shifting action. The front and rear suspension works well together with the front feeling planted and stable at all times with the rear following. Not once did I find myself in a muddle – a puddle yes but never a muddle!

Similar to the 250, the 450 delivers its power in a smooth and linear fashion with no hesitation or flat spots which make it a very easy bike to ride. On the day it was my favourite bike by far which is unusual as I consider myself to be an MX2 class specialist.

All in all I'm impressed with both these bikes and the 2008 Husqvarna TCs have definitely improved from the '07 and earlier models. With the take-over from BMW done and dusted and an exciting new 250 four-stroke engine ready for production in 2009 things are really looking up for the Husqvarna brand.



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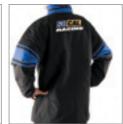


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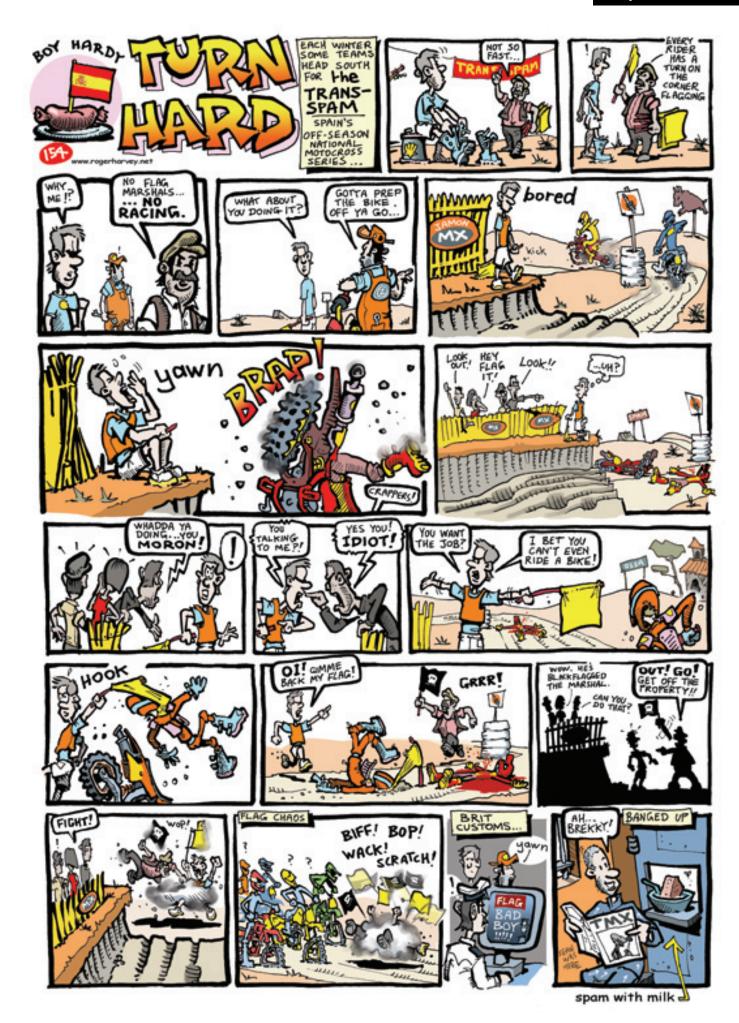






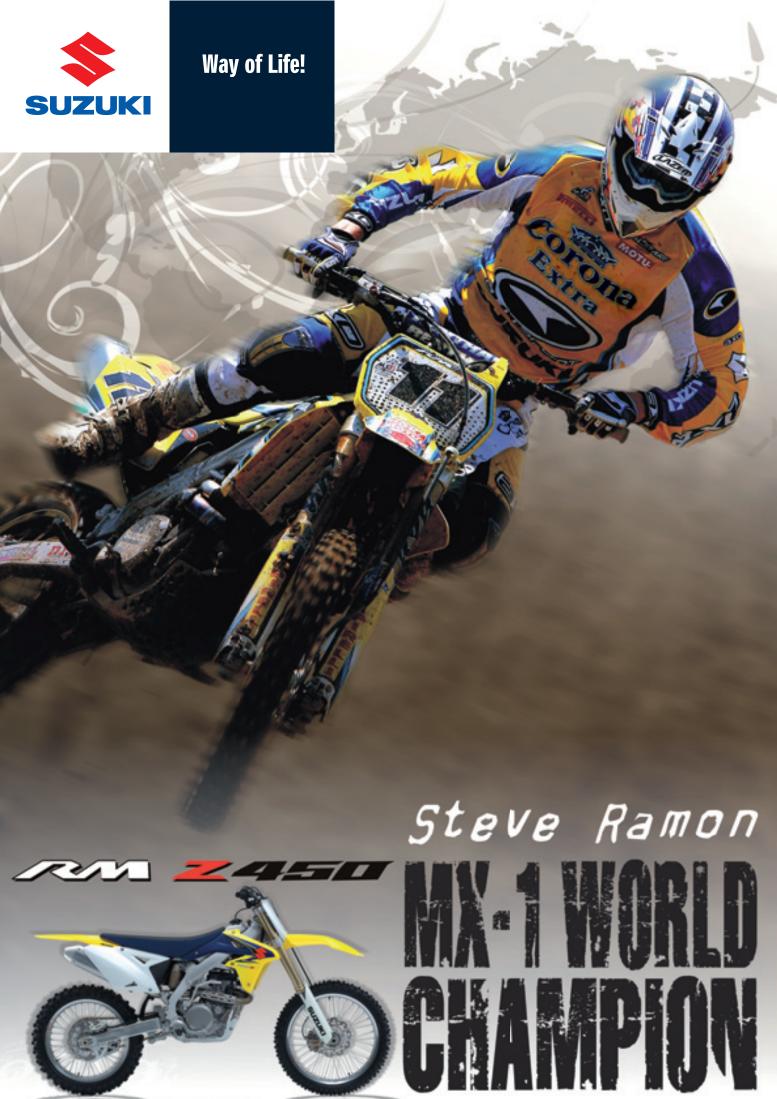














As we chatted in the Budds Creek paddock three weeks after being crowned he was forthright. "It's been a great year for me, world ampion and also Belgian champion. But the eason didn't run so smoothly. It just wasn't happening at the beginning of the season. Some of it was bad luck, bad starts, the results were not there and then you don't have the confidence in vourself.

"Already before Valkenswaard I knew that I had to be consistent and didn't want to drop out of the top live all year. The first moto was okay with second but already in the second moto I vas sixth. For me, for myself, that was a bad noto. In Spain again the first moto was good with third but I had to take my second bike just before the start of race two which is not a good way to go to the line. Then Nemeth crashed in front of me and took me down.

"But you can have one bad moto in a year I cannot complain about the bike. In four rs the team has never let me down and even at Bellpuig the problem was recognised before t. What happened after that with Nemeth vas just bad luc

"But one week later in Portugal was a disaster for me. I went down in the first turn both motos. It was really difficult for me after Portugal. I was

already saying to myself that it was over for this year. Josh was really strong and consistent so he already had a big gap and I knew it was going to be difficult. But we did some testing with the bike, my confidence was getting better and I started getting podiums, building to my moto wins in France and Sweden."

The victory at St Jean D'Angely was particularly sweet with Steve running down Coppins in style before sweeping past decisively and dropping the series leader at more than a second-a-lan

Remember that reference to the starts? That encouraged me to scan through the Youthstream lap charts.

Steve only beat Josh twice through the first eight GPs but it was not until round nine in Sweden that Steve led the Kiwi on the opening lap of a race. While Josh, strictly to plan, was averaging a top three start every week, Steve's average was 11th and, even ignoring the four first-lap carnage motos, he wasn't breaking top six! Steve's average first-lap placing over the entire series was 11th so take your hat off to the '07 champ!

Even after his second win in Sweden - the only day all year when he gated ahead of Coppins - Steve uttered doubts about any title dreams. "Of course, under normal circumstances Josh was too far away. It was more than 100 points and Josh was riding really consistent, good starts and staying in there, exactly what I had planned to do. I hadn't given up, I was just being realistic. But somewhere in my mind I knew anything can happen and it did!"

At Loket in the Czech Republic. Two DNFs and a busted shoulder were the beginning of the end for Coppins but Steve could not take full advantage. "That was also a bad race for me. Barragan crashed right in front of me in the first race. I was already in the air and couldn't do anything about it. I also went down hard and hurt both wrists. Immediately there was so much pain. You try to put it out of your mind at first vou're in a race and the first thing you have to do is save as much as possible from that race before you start thinking about anything else.

"But I could still ride. Not in the week, only at the races and I had to tape it but then I made the big crash in the first moto in Ireland and landed on the same hand, the left one. After that it was much worse. Already in free practice on Saturday I had jumped too short, landed really hard and hurt the right wrist too and it was still a problem at Donington.

"Those races were so difficult in so many





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ways. Sure Josh was out but I was riding hurt and I still had to make up the points. I didn't know how bad Josh was. Perhaps he would be back and ready to race so I needed every point. It was a little frustrating because I had turned round my season in the middle of the year but with my wrists it wasn't possible anymore to push for the win. Even the podium was difficult.

"I didn't tell anyone how much pain I had. It was not easy for me to go full gas - the wrist was in my mind every jump. I had to ride my maximum but I ept hurting my wrist again and again. But I couldn't hold back, I needed every point. Ireland was the worst. I was on the ground two times on the first lap and I was really proud how I came back there, particularly the second moto. I had hurt my wrist and my hand so bad again when I crashed in the first moto and at the finish I had so much pain I wasn't even sure if I could start the second moto. But I came to fourth."

That was a decisive moto, as was the charge from 11th which took Steve past Josh midway through race one at Donington. And even when Coppins' bike stayed in the truck on Friday at Lierop it still wasn't over. Steve now had the red plate but Strijbos and Pourcel were still breathing down his neck. However, a single fourth place would clinch it.

"Of course I wanted to clinch the title in the first moto because anything can happen in the last moto. But I like Lierop and I didn't go there looking for a fourth place. I had the problem with my wrist but I knew I could do something there and I went there hoping to win the GP. But I was so close to the title that I was also a little bit nervous to make a mistake and go down.

"I wasn't pushing so hard in the beginning, just trying to find a pace I could ride all moto and I did that. And I got second. I was champion. Kevin had been fast but I knew from there it was possible to win the GP. I went for it the second moto and was leading twice but I turned my right leg and I had cramps in my leg and had to sit down. I hadn't been able to practice with the bike in the week after Loket and it told in the end. But I really tried to win the second moto.

"I wanted to win GPs but I just didn't manage it this year. I want to win every time I go to the start. I have won in the past and I will win in the future. I won motos this year, I came close in others and I scored more points than anyone else. That's why I am champion Of course, it is a pity for Josh but that's motocross. It's not the first time something like this has happened and it won't be the last. Next year he has a chance again."

"I think we had a good feeling in the team. At the start of the year Kevin was making good results and of course the team was really behind him but there was never a tir when they were not also still behind me. Sylvain (Geboers) has taken more of a back seat these days and leaves most things to Eric now but he's still there if you need him.

"I never worked with Ken (De Dycker) 🚾 but Kevin and me always got on okay and I'm sure it will bet he same with Ken. The Japanese guys are coming to Europe in October and we will do some testing with the new bike.

"I just rode a standard bike with fuel injection for a few laps so far but I'm really looking forward to riding it next year. In the beginning it was a little strange but the pick up is good - the response is already there even when you give a little bit of gas.





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DESPITE HAVING a killer range of bikes, 2007 hasn't been the most successful year for Gas Gas on the world or British trials scene. The meteoric rise of Toni Bou and a freak workshop accident that left Shaun Morris unable to ride the final round of our domestic series has meant silverware in the Spanish manufacturer's trophy cabinet has been conspicuous by its absence.

With '07 being a year to put behind them the engineers at the Torremirona factory have moved on and built an even better batch of trials bikes for 2008. Changes include new shape mudguards, a new racier looking headlamp, FIM-legal fully enclosed front disc cover, smart new graphics, a new radiator, revised frame geometry with all-new engine and footpeg placement, a beefed up gearbox and finally changes to the kickstart mechanism.

While it's fair to say that Gas Gas haven't exactly reinvented the wheel with their new TXTs they have refined what's already a well-refined range of bikes to help keep 'em ahead of the competition.

In my opinion Gas Gas have got a great and very complete range of bikes – 125, 200, 250, 280 and 300 – that are all very easy to ride, incredibly light and ridiculously easy to work on if you feel the need. Utilising top quality parts such as AJP brakes, Marzocchi forks, Sachs shocks and so on these bikes are ready to ride straight from the crate with little or no adjustment needed.

With the chassis, brakes and suspension on all the bikes being the same – which isn't at all

uncommon for trials bikes these days – I'll tell you how they feel first before moving on to the different engine sizes.

Unlike back in the day where we had to ride some real unforgiving, poor turning monsters there's no such thing as a bad trials bike anymore. The Gas Gas TXTs follow that rule too – they turn well, have great brakes and most importantly of all come complete with a flat sump guard.

The suspension is equally as sweet as the skid plate, handling high-speed hits with ease and offering constant tyre to ground grip in slow speed rocky sections too – good all-round performance. Now to move on to the different size motors...

There used to be a time when schoolies could hop right on to a 250 and fire through sections with little or no rider skill involved. Now, 12 to 17-year-olds are limited to 125cc bikes. Not only has this helped make the nippers better riders as they can't rely on a big handful of throttle to see them through, it's also ensured that the manufacturers are knocking out better and better 125cc bikes — it's a real win-win thing.

The 125 Gasser is one of the best youth bikes on the market – along with the '07 onwards 125cc Beta Rev-3 which I also really rate. The power is amazing and you can either really labour the motor that never feels like it's gonna give up and stall or get the motor singing. There's a plethora of power at high revs and if you get your body and the bike working in unison there's not a lot that will or indeed is



SPECS

TXT 125 PRO

Capacity: 124.8cc
Bore and stroke: 54mm x 54.5mm
Front suspension: 40mm Marzocchi

Rear suspension: Sachs
Front brake: 185mm disc
Rear brake: 150mm disc
Carburettor: Dell'Orto PHBL26BS
Gearbox: Six-speed

Wheelbase: 1330mm
Dry weight: 68kg

TXT 200 PRO

Capacity: 175.3cc
Bore and stroke: 64mm x 54.5mm
Front suspension: 40mm Marzocchi

Rear suspension: Sachs
Front brake: 185mm disc
Rear brake: 150mm disc
Carburettor: Dell'Orto PHBL26BS

Gearbox: Six-speed Wheelbase: 1330mm Dry weight: 68kg







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Capacity:

PRO 247.7cc

72.5mm x 60mm Bore and stroke: Front suspension: 40mm Marzocchi Rear suspension: Sachs Front brake: 185mm disc Rear brake: 150mm disc

Dell'Orto PHBL26BS Carburettor: Gearbox: Six-speed Wheelbase: 1330mm Dry weight: 68kg

PRO **TXT 280**

Capacity: 272.2cc Bore and stroke: 76mm x 60mm 40mm Marzocchi Front suspension: Rear suspension: Sachs Front brake: 185mm disc

Rear brake: 150mm disc Dell'Orto PHBL26BS Carburettor: Gearbox: Six-speed

Wheelbase: 1330mm Dry weight: 68kg

PRO TXT 300 294.1cc Capacity:

Dry weight:

Bore and stroke: 79mm x 60mm Front suspension: 40mm Marzocchi Rear suspension: Sachs Front brake: 185mm disc Rear brake: 150mm disc Dell'Orto PHBL26BS Carburettor: Six-speed Gearbox: Wheelbase. 1330mm

68kg

capable of stopping you!

The 200 is a bit of funny one. Out of the whole range I'd say it's quite possibly the bike that's suited best for clubman riders but because it says 200 on the swingarm and Raga, Morris or Colley never ride anything smaller than a 250 hardly anyone's willing to go out and buy one.

With a soft but still very punchy power delivery the 200 is easy to find grip with and you can actually ride it through a section without it wanting to pull your arms out of their sockets or run away with you. I can only recommend you try one for yourself because I'm sure you'll like it as it's much more useable than the 250 or 280.

While the 250 might be a little less usable for the masses, it's actually my favourite bike of the bunch. The carburation is perfect which means it's possible to get the nice smooth power down to the ground to get up and over any obstacle in your path.

Like all the TXTs the 250 turns very well, doesn't do anything unruly and if I'm honest is a super-functional trials weapon that feels light and easy to ride

For expert riders it's a toss up between the 250 and the 280 - they're both great performers with bags of power. In the wrong hands the 280 can do more damage than good as it's a bit of an animal and is certainly capable of putting a few hairs on your chest.

The 300 on the other hand is the complete opposite. The engine note sounds so grunty when fired up and when you hop on you find that's exactly what you're getting - grunt! Bags and bags of low-end power means you can chuck it in a high gear and just putt-putt-putt along putting all that torque to good use. Rev it too hard and you're wasting your time - this machine's all about using good throttle control to keep the bike driving forwards.

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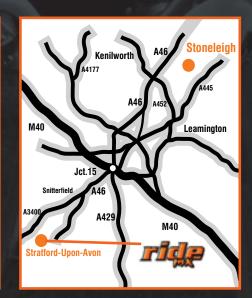


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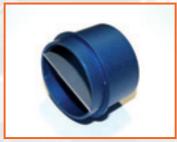
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BILLAMIN South

The new British MXI cha p talks us round-by-round through his title-winning season, tells us how CAS Honda otivated hi to beat their boy and why he then joined the ...

e rides hard, plays hard, says what he bloody well likes and likes what he bloody well says – look up 'uncompromising' in the dictionary and it'll give Billy MacKenzie as the definition. With an adult British MX title finally to his name and the ink still almost wet on his CAS Honda contract we figured one page at the back of the mag didn't really do him justice. So we fired an email north and sat back and waited for the reply...



DBR: First up, talk us through the British championship season starting at Canada Heights where you finished third overall with a 2-3 card.

BM: "In the first moto I didn't time the jump behind the gate that well but the Kawasaki was so fast that I made up a lot of ground and was second into the first corner. I was soon in the lead and was pulling away. I was about six or seven seconds in front but I started to relax a little too much. I wasn't hitting the ruts as hard as I should have been late into the moto.

'Crockard started to get near and then I had a massive 'moment' and smashed my stomach. I was winded for a few laps and struggled to breathe. He went past and I decided to look towards a safe second but we found some backmarkers near the end and I put in a charge on the last two laps and got really close by the flag. After that I kinda knew I had more speed than most so I was feeling confident.

"In the second moto I think I had the biggest holeshot ever! I learned from the first race and gave the bike more revs on the concrete start. It was huge! I was already looking behind me halfway up the straight! I braked just a little bit too late which allowed De Dycker to come through by the first turn and we both made a run for it. I mistakenly thought second place would give me the win overall but I stalled the bike on a downhill - even though it re-started on the third kick which was great - and then hit a neutral which caused me to crash and drop to third position later on. I had to hold Crockard off in the last couple of laps but dug deep and was even catching Brad for second

"Overall I was disappointed because I think I could have won both races if I was prepared better.'

DBR: Round 2 - Landrake - third overall with a 2-3 card.

BM: "Landrake was pretty cool from what I remember, I felt fast all day and the bike was working sweet. On the hardpack track the Kawa was really getting the power to the floor. De Dycker was riding like a bully but not just with me. We were close in the first moto but I suffered a bit with the backmarkers and lost concentration with my breathing and my arms tightened up which was frustrating.

"The track wasn't that great compared to previous years. It was hard and really fast so it was pretty difficult and tricky to make up time. He hit me pretty hard in that second race - he wrecked the bike, burst my flywheel cover and the gear lever. I was just trying to get through the gears and arrive to the finish as guick as I could but I was stuck in second the whole way. I knew I had to keep going and was ragging her till the end - Luka was pulling his hair out cos he thought I was gonna blow her up but I would rather blow her up than risk losing one point!

"James came on me the last two laps and came round on the outside, I couldn't open the throttle cos I was already flat out hitting the limiter! So in the next corner I put a really hard pass on him but I wasn't gonna let him take even a point!

"I took another podium but the only real positive is that we were still learning about the bike and it was working really well for me. I rode with my phone in my legendary Pro Grip pockets in the first race – I was walking the track and took my phone with me to check the time, then forgot about it till after the race! I was on the podium when we got handed our cheques for the winning and Gordy saw me put them in my Pro Grip pocket – he made a joke about it then didn't believe me when I told him I had my phone on me in the first race! Ha.

DBR: Round 3 - Lyng - second overall with a 3-1 card.

BM: "Winning a moto felt really good and made me instantly believe that I could do it more often. The first race was terrible - I had a monster of a holeshot and then sprinted away on the first laps but I was making bad lines choices, I had the worse arm-pump ever and was struggling to get around! I had run-ins with Brad and also Gordy so it was a hectic moto and I was lucky to get third after De Dycker was dropped to sixth for the exhaust problem.

"I was pissed off with how bad I rode so I really studied the track between motos to see where I was going wrong. Again I had a great start on the Kawasaki and just went straight away. The lines were easier and I was flowing better. Even when I could see some of the others coming near I put on a spurt and didn't have any trouble maintaining a gap of around 10 seconds. It felt like practice to be honest and was

very straightforward. When De Dycker DNFed it meant the red plate was mine which made the day even better! And I didn't plan on ever giving it back after that!"

DBR:Round 4 - Langrish - first overall with a 3-1 card.

BM: "I got the start wrong in the first moto and then had a small crash while trying to pass Easty. I had to work again to come through but the track was so fast and required so much concentration it was not easy. I had some luck when Gordy DNFed so that was some points for the championship. I had weird sleep patterns after Japan and needed to rest after the first race. I did not even look at the track for the second moto but stayed in the camper and told myself I would do whatever it takes to make a holeshot and get away — luckily that's what happened.

"It was one of the toughest races ever because I had to keep really focussed on that track and it was so hard to pull out even a few tenths of a second because of the high speed. I did everything I could to shake Brad but he stuck with me and I had to inch away a tiny bit each lap. By the end I had a lead of six seconds but it was no easy ride. Brad was on it and never gave me a second to breathe. I was wasted by the end, I was just glad it was over that day. It had been tough coming back from Japan and being the British hero again – there was a lot of attention my way and I was still jet-lagged.

"Since I sorted out the problem with my diet I really felt that I was getting to the level I wanted to be at. My confidence was going up every week. It was really cool after Japan and I really wanted some similar results."

DBR: Round 5 - Desertmartin - fourth overall with a 4-4 card.

BM: "It was a hard day but I did not ride well and didn't really deserve the podium. The speed was there, I had pole and led the races but my back was still not right after my crash at Bulgaria and I found it hard to stand up on the bike. I couldn't get comfortable or breathe right. It was a bit of a non-event for me really and it was a weekend I started to have doubts about the championship.

"I rode terrible and started to think maybe it wasn't my diet that was the problem

cos I just died after 10 minutes in both races. I can remember all the CAS boys jumping and screaming and that pissed me off – I wanted to make sure they were never gonna get this championship. Fortunately though after another week my back was good again and I could ride comfortably again so I kept eating the chocolate and chips!"

DBR: Round 6 - Skelder Bank - first overall with a 1 card.

BM: "It was a complicated day but I was riding well and feel like I deserved the win. The first race was great. I got away and had a six-second lead. De Dycker got close as we found the backmarkers but I put some hard laps down and kept smooth to take the moto

"The rain really plummeted throughout the whole of the second moto, I went down at the start and someone ran over me. The gear lever was gone and there was nothing that could be done in the pits so I went out and kept smooth and was riding well. I made up a lot of time and was enjoying myself. De Dycker had crashed so I passed him and reached fifth but then they put out the red flags.

"The result should not have counted and we made our protest for the second moto which was accepted. In my opinion the track was still rideable and I was still doing all the jumps. As far as I knew the meeting would only count from the first race which gave me another overall and a couple more points in the championship."

DBR: Round 7 - Brampton - second overall with a 3-2 card.

BM: "I went down at the start of the first race and then pushed as hard as I could. It was the first time we had raced in sand for a while so we struggled to get the set-up of the bike just right throughout the day and it affected me in the first moto. I had some arm-pump and could not hold off Brad at the end.

"I had a better start in the second race and was around sixth. I got up to second and was trying as much as I could to close De Dycker but he rode well. He fell off towards the end and I made some quick laps to get within two-and-a-half seconds of him but it was just a bit too late."





DBR: Round 8 - Pontrilas - second overall with a 3-2 card.

BM: "I have been chasing this for so long and it is something very cool to be British champion. We did not drop out of the top four in each moto and that's what wins championships. I am glad Tanel came over – he really helped us out. I knew Tanel would move over if he had to but it was actually better that he won because then I only lost two points.

"The bike was working fantastically and I holeshot again in the second race. I had no bother with arm-pump and had 18 seconds over Ken who was back in fifth. Tanel stayed behind me all the time — he was easily faster but we cruised together and I felt like I had things under control. When we came into the last stages I gave him some space and let him go because he deserved the win. I then concentrated on not making any mistakes and not doing anything stupid.

"I would like to say a big thank you to Kawasaki. They have been amazing this year and have really opened my eyes as to what it is like to be on a factory team. They are a bunch of great people. Steve Guttridge made it all possible, he opened the door and Jan took a chance on me. My mechanic Luka has also been a star. I have never ridden a bike quite like the KXF.

"It was a good day, nice weather and a nice track even if it was hard in the second race because the sun was low and it was difficult to see. It's always nice to win, it doesn't matter what race it is!"

DBR: How does it feel to finally win an adult British championship title?

BM: "Such a relief! It felt like I was never gonna win one. I saw Tommy coming up and started thinking about where I was at his age, how he was going for a British championship already and thought "**k he's doing good'. But then I remembered that I had done the same and came up short just like him.

"I mean, I tied on points with Swordy when I was 18 for the championship so really (in a way!) I could say I have won one and the year before I tied with him for second when I was 17. But now that I've won it's made me feel so much stronger going into next season. It really feels like I am the best now – not just thinking I am the best! I got the #1 to prove it."

DBR: What for you was the decisive point in this year's series – Lyng maybe when De Dycker had a nightmare?

BM: "It was at Whitby. After Ireland I was so pissed off with myself and the fact that CAS were loving it so much that I had a bad weekend I decided then that I wasn't gonna let Ken win another race. Well that's what I said – it didn't quite work out that way but I remember the feeling and the aggression I had towards it.

"I knew the championship wouldn't just come to me and that I needed to be winning races, not just counting on my points lead to keep me safe. De Dycker had a nightmare because of himself. I had problems with my bike too – two races my gear lever was snapped and I was stuck in second gear but I still finished inside the top three. When his back brake went he pulled off – that's not the kinda attitude you should have towards a championship. Lyng was a sand track, he could easily have been top five with no back brake."

DBR: Can you tell us what happened at Kawasaki and why you've gone to CAS after just a season?

BM: "Kawasaki have been absolutely brilliant, I mean beyond my expectations. My mechanic Luka brought a new meaning to the job, his attention to detail and me as a rider was unbelievable, it really was. Everyone at Kawasaki and on the team were the

best people to work for in the industry and I'm glad I have the chance to say this A W before my work starts for Honda.

"I had no problems at all with Kawasaki, in fact the opposite. I was becoming the main rider there, my input towards the bike was great and they really appreciated having someone who knows the bike inside out. I won the first MX1 GP for them on the 450 so I was moulding into the team exceptionally.

"The reason I changed was because the offer from Honda was a deal I couldn't refuse, that's the black and white of it. There was a lot of things in the Honda deal that would let me completely concentrate on my riding. There is a lot of pressure from travelling from one GP to the next and Honda can take care of that for me. Motocross is a short career and going to another Japanese bike meant that the bike is a safe bet."

DBR: What is it with you and Japan?

BM: "If I had the answer for that I would be world champion for the last three years! EVERYONE has asked me this and I honestly don't know. Everything I do in Japan is completely against the rules of being an athlete! I think maybe that I go to bed really, really early and get up early so this is something I am gonna try and sort out. Get up at like 4 or 5am or something."

DBR: How big an influence is your father on your career and is anyone else a big influence?

BM: "Obviously like any father he has been a great influence on my racing from the way I think, how I act on and off the track, taking care of my bikes in the younger days and my attitude towards winning. He's the guy that has partly moulded me into the way I am today. I notice more these days how like my dad I am. Other people are Ash Kane, Craig Elwell, my girlfriend Libby, Andrew Bell, Steve Dixon and everyone at Yamaha, Kevin Hoare, Bryan (sorry if I've missed anyone). All these people have given me direction and ideas throughout my racing, supported me through good times and bad. Almost every decision I have made through racing, someone from the above list has given me the idea or the okay to do so."

DBR: Do you feel you are fulfilling your potential as a motocross rider?

BM: "I think I am now but only recently. I think there is a lot more to come still though. I think I'll be hitting my peak pretty soon."

DBR: Who do you expect to be your biggest British championship title rival? BM: "Brad!"

DBR: Any predictions for next year?

BM: "Erm, always a dodgy one to answer but, hell, I wanna be world champion! And British again! I think in '08 when I'm with CAS on the Honda we'll definitely make quick progress. They are the kinda team that work hard for results and if you are part of the team you get everything they have to offer."

DBR: Finally, just how frikkin' awesome is Easty as MXdN team manager?

BM: "He was the damage! We all loved him! Me and Easty have been friends for a couple years now. I go riding with him whenever I can, he really knows what he's talking about and has the same attitude as me. I like hearing his stories from racing and he's good to ride with. I think he should have the job forever! He gives it some helmet!"





top-flight MX at the end of '05 but Jussi Vehvilainen's He walked away fro still winning hearts – and breaking bones – in the MX3 world cha pionship...

Words and photos by Alex

JUSSI VEHVILAINEN is one of the most popular foreigners ever to have ridden full-time in Britain – not only for his friendly demeanour but also because the fiery Finn is one of the gutsiest triers in the game.

His all-action style and never-ending desire saw Jussi break his back three times before he quit CAS Honda and the GP big-time at the end of 2005 but at the age of 29 he was back on the world championship trail in 2007 to clinch a FIM bronze medal

in MX3 on the final lap of GP racing this summer.

"Yes, I'm still a GP rider, even if it's in the veteran class! No, only joking – but it is different, good fun and that's what counts.

And I even broke my neck again!" he adds in that jovial barking tone which betrays so many Finns. "I hadn't even thought about MX1 or MX2 since I left CAS at the end of '05. I took a fresh look at my future and they were no longer part of it. I saw I had gone past my peak and I couldn't see any reason to keep riding







there just to make up the numbers.

"But MX3 is still world class racing, just a slightly lower standard. It is a world championship, the racing is pretty good and the top guys are still pretty fast. Yves Demaria doesn't need any introduction and Sven Breugelmans has surprised me this year. He isn't just fast in sand, he has also been fast on hard tracks so I'm not losing to bad riders.

"My goal was to be top three all year. It didn't really happen though I guess that was because I kept hurting myself. I missed three GPs but I kept going for that top three finish and I got it on the last lap."

That final vital point at Faenza in September came with a pass on '05 champ Breugelmans after Jussi had come out on top of an almost race-long tussle with 1999 world 500cc champion Andrea Bartolini and run down the points lead which Alvaro Lozano and Kris Salaets had on him at the start of the day.

"You need to race hard here but I don't think I've been riding over the limit. You can't do that with a 480. I still approach racing professionally, training hard and doing everything I can but it's more fun again nowadays. The top guys are fast but the point is that there is not so much depth so it doesn't matter quite so much if you don't make a good start.

"If you make a bad start or crash you can still get back to top eight pretty quickly. And, even if you have a bad day, you won't be out of the top 10. It's just that little bit easier – those days when you are banging your head against a brick wall in a train in 15th place on a track where passing is difficult, they don't happen here."

With little publicity in the biking press, a major obstacle MX3 riders have to overcome is finance because – as in MX1/MX2 – there is no start or prize money.

"The biggest job was to put together the sponsorship but that's the same in any class and we will continue next year. I was quite lucky in this. My

main sponsor is from Holland. They manufacture vegetable machinery and we came together because they supply my dad who has a big onion farm back in Finland."

And 'we' in JPV (Jussi's middle name is Pekka) Racing includes Paul Teasdale who has rejoined him from the CAS days. "Paul is a one of the real plus sides. It's very important to have a good mechanic, a guy I can trust, who believes in me but also someone I can get on, a good friend. I knew from our time at CAS that it would work out.

"You spend too long together in this sport to work with someone you don't get on with so that is very important. Even more so here than in MX1. This is old school. I travel with the truck also to most of the races, pretty much like it was at the start of my career. And it's fun. We had some nice trips, like the eastern tour. We had a race in Slovakia, then Bulgaria and we went through Hungary and Romania. Those guys in MX1 and MX2 don't do that anymore, they just fly to the race, straight back home afterwards and they see nothing of the world except the race track.

"This trip too. We've been on the road since Denmark, then to Switzerland and straight here to Italy and we've been camping out of the truck. And you know, when I was young I never really took much interest in the different countries but it's nice now to see how different people live. You appreciate these things more as you get a little older."

It's undoubtedly true to say that injuries wrecked Jussi's career. "Yes. I broke my back three times racing MX1. And even this year I also broke my neck a bit. That was in Sweden and earlier in the year I totally ripped the ligaments off my shoulder and hurt the bicep muscles of my right arm and in Slovakia I broke my ACL."

But even that list cannot depress Jussi. "I get operated on Thursday. I'm getting them all done at once at a place called Joensuu, almost in Russia. Full service for one day!"





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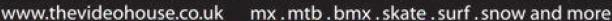


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US OPEN



dbr stateside



Just after practice on the first day of the 2007 US Open of Supercross in Las Vegas, James Stewart calls an impromptu press conference to announce that he won't be racing because he doesn't feel he can give it his all.

A few minutes later, the Race and Sports Book at the MGM Grand Casino announce that all bets are off. With Stewart out they can no longer make an accurate gauge of the odds of anyone else winning the event. As it turns out, the bookies know what they're doing.

The US Open is a two-night event that combines the scores of the two Main Events in the same way that an outdoor motocross combines the scores of the two motos in order to determine an overall champion. However, in 2006 the US Open began offering a 'Trifecta' in addition to the \$100,000 that goes to the winner. If one rider can win the Superpole (fast qualifying lap), get the Main Event holeshot

If one rider does that on both nights the \$100,000 purse becomes a \$250,000 windfall.

The obvious odds for victory with Stewart out favour San Manuel Yamaha's Chad Reed and on night one Reed shows that he has it under control as he successfully lands the fastest Superpole time and then heads to the Main Event alongside heat winners Mike Alessi - making his Suzuki debut - and Yamaha's Grant Langston.

Reed muscles his way to the holeshot, elbowing Alessi and others out of the way. "The start was awesome," Reed says. "I fought for it all the way down to the first turn. I sacked up, got the elbows up and went for it. He [Alessi] got the jump a little bit on me and then he started leaning but he's a little smaller than me and it was kind of funny to be honest. As soon as I went over the line I was just like 'all right, the

holeshot and I knew if I got the holeshot I was going to be gone. I put more effort into that start than the race. It was all about that. The holeshot's probably the hardest thing about all of that '

And Reed is gone, taking a seemingly easy win and the first night's Trifecta after fighting through some lappers on the tight circuit late in the race. "I was patient because I knew I had a good lead on Grant," Reed says. "We ride every day at the track and I know where I stand speedwise on supercross to Grant. I was confident that I could put some good laps down and try to inch away. Tomorrow we're going to have a new track and some things on the bike that Grant had tonight and I didn't so we're going to learn and get prepared for '08."

Langston's second, Honda's Andrew Short's third, Monster Energy Kawasaki's Timmy Ferry is fourth and Alessi's fifth.





dbr stateside





Night two is a whole new game. Reed has to repeat his night-one performance to a tee in order to get the biggest payday in US Open history and it starts out pretty good too when he takes the Superpole win again, nearly crashing as he scrubs the finish line jump. "That scared the sh*t out of me." Reed says later.

When the Main Event rolls around though it goes tits-up for the Aussie. Reed lines up inside of Ferry and Langston but has Short to his inside. Going into the first turn everyone

tangles. As they get up Langston notices that the top four from night one are all on the ground.

"I look around and the guys who went 1-2-3-4 were all laying on the ground," Langston says. "I'm like 'this thing's still up for grabs'! Alessi fell too but he was gone. The four of us were down for a while so I'm thinking 'I've got to go for it'!"

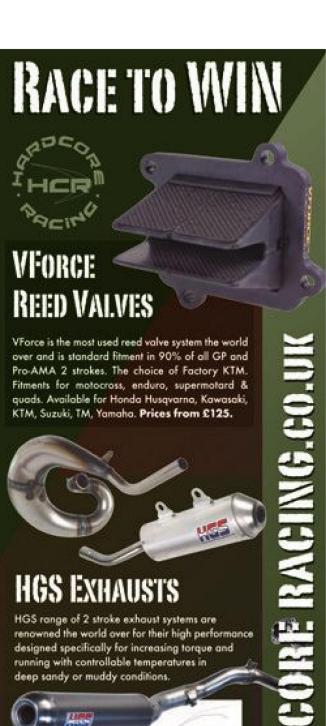
Ferry isn't happy. "I got a good jump but I was a little bit toward the outside," Ferry says. "I thought that would be the safer route than getting pinched on the end. Chad just came in obviously entirely too hot. I'm not sure if he would've been able to stop even if I wasn't there. I know he was going for the money. There was a lot of money on the line for him and I think it was a bad judgment call by him. Obviously, we all went down so it was not good. I think the only people who liked it were maybe some of the fans."

Ferry gets going just in front of the leader, nearly a lap behind. Langston gets going just behind Short and Reed's behind Langston. Reed goes by Langston after a few laps and is working on Short when it goes pear-shaped for the second time. As Reed shoves his way to the inside of Short he catches Short's front wheel and they both go down. Reed's up quickly as is Short and they both start moving just as Langston passes them - but then Reed runs into Langston's rear wheel as he attempts to cut under the South African going into the turn and falls a third time.

At that point, Reed's bid for the US Open championship is gone. "I don't know, it all happened so fast," Reed says of the start. "What can you do? It's one of those things. Timmy's one of my good friends. He's one of the guys that I ride with during the week. He's obviously really heated about it and it sucks but I was going for the Trifecta. He came in there hot and I ran it in there and it's a race. I knew what I had to do to get the Trifecta and I was going for it.

"That's all I'm taking away from tonight is that every time I was out there I laid it down and I went for it. I almost crashed in my Superpole, I crashed in the Main three times and I got back up and fought hard. I felt that I had my fight back and my speed back and it was a fun weekend. I didn't win but I still won a sh*tload of money and I'm taking away from here a lot of positives."

Langston doesn't know where he stands in the overall rankings but late in the race he sees a pitboard message that seems urgent. "There was too much on the pitboard," Langston says. "My mechanic was trying to give me his whole life's story on the pitboard. He had +7, laps, position, person... I never figured it out in the correct order. And then all I saw was a big sign that said 'Get Byrne!' so I was thinking 'maybe he knows something I don't know'. I put my





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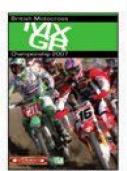


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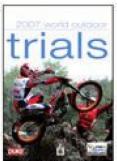




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dbr stateside



head down and I was adamant on getting Byrne and right when I caught him he made it easy by tipping over."

Jake Weimer takes the Main Event win on night two on his CRF250R

just in front of arenacross champ Josh Demuth, Alessi, Dan Reardon, Langston, Justin Brayton, Short, Reed, Heath Voss and Jason Thomas.

Langston wins the US Open with a 2-5 score, tying on points with Reed.

"I'm like '2-5 – I should at least be on the podium'," Langston says.

"Everyone was like 'you may have won'. Then it was 'I think you won'. Then it was 'I might be wrong but I'm pretty sure you won'. I'm like 'could someone get the facts around here?'. I'm looking at the cheque on the podium wondering if I could grab it. It's unreal. I never thought this would turn out this way with that ending but I'm very happy."

Reed's second overall, Demuth's third, Weimer's fourth and Alessi is back in fifth.

"We've seen in the past that maybe not the fastest guy has won the US Open," Langston says. "Multiple years guys that just stayed out of trouble and put in two nights won. I think yesterday I had a feeling that I had a good shot at it tonight. I just thought a second last night's as good as a win. I felt good in practice and set the fastest time and I was pretty excited. My rear wheel broke loose in Superpole and cost me two tenths and I lost $\,$ by one tenth so I was like 'man, I've got to win something'. So I guess I just took the big one.

Reed still takes the event as a positive. "It's a stepping stone," Reed says. "We're in October and a lot of things need to happen. We've made a lot of them happen but it sucks that James got hurt. I think on this weekend I was the best guy here and even with one crash I would've won the overall and with a second crash I still could've gotten back up there but that third one was the one that sealed the deal. It was over after that."

US OPEN Overall results

Grant Langston

Chad Reed

38 Josh Demuth 37

36 Jake Weimer

Mike Alessi 36 Andrew Short 34

32 Dan Reardon Justin Brayton 28

27 Tim Ferry

10 Michael Byrne 22

38 points





radio america

After taking down Tommy Gun at the MXdN, Speedy Reedy does the same to Timmy Ferry at the US Open - sheesh, will the ample antipodean never learn?

as the 'World's Richest Supercross' and that's only half right. It is indeed a very lucrative race for the riders as 100,000 bucks are up for grabs but it's not a supercross – it's as much a supercross as the Weston Beach Race is a GP. It's held in a hotel in Las Vegas called the MGM (named after the movie studio, y'know with the big ass lion roaring at the beginning, I don't even know if you guys have this over there -I'll be quiet now).

This hotel has an arena built into it and that's where the 'supercross' is held. The keyword in that sentence was 'arena' which means it's an arenacross, not a supercross. With it being an arenacross the track is tight and the only way to make a pass is to 'make' room for yourself which sometimes leaves other riders upset. More on this later.

The folks at Live Nation (race promoter) throw around a lot of prize money as explained but they go above and beyond that by teaming up with Toyota trucks and offering a \$250,000 Toyota Trifecta. To get all of this cheese, a rider has to win both

nights, both heats, get both holeshots and win both Superpoles which is a one-lap, balls-to-the-walls contest, one rider at a time. San Manuel Yamaha's Chad Reed had accomplished four out of the six going into Saturday's Main Event. This is the point where things get real goofy so stay with me here.

Everybody knew that come hell or high water Chad was going to get the holeshot. The crowd knew it, the other riders knew it and the hot dog lady probably knew it as the announcers just wouldn't let it die, constantly reminding all of us that CR had a chance at two hundred and fiddy grand (and who reading this does NOT think Chad would go on to the win if he did grab the holeshot -

besides Sutty?).
So when Monster Energy Kawasaki's Tim Ferry got the jump out of the gate and looked like he was heading for the holeshot everybody knew that Skippy was going to do everything in his power to 'make' room for himself in that narrow first turn. Ferry had a wheel on everybody and proceeded to start moving over to the inside when Reed, in a desperate move, grabbed a handful of throttle and tried to 'make' room. Ferry and Reed tangled bars and both went down. Red Dog got the worst of it because he was on the outside and flew into the arena's wall! The crash

also collected Grant Langston, Andrew Short and Suzuki's newest rider Mike Alessi. Did I happen to mention that the five guys that went down also happened to have finished 1-2-3-4-5 the previous night? Ladies and gentlemen, the race was now officially on

So who benefited the most from this carnage? Factory Connections Jake Weimer was the leader. You are probably sitting there thinking 'Jake Weimer was on a 450?' Nope, in yet another twist to this race it was a run-what-ya-brung format. This means it was open to Lites riders and Weimer was a quic learner. In second was the original freestyler, Carey Hart's new rider Josh Demuth. Demuth is an interesting rider having won three arenacross titles years ago and then promptly dropping

here is this race in America called the US Open. It's billed off the face of the earth. He was working in a dealership last year in his home state of Texas. When's the last time your parts guy raced the US Open? So while the big dogs were picking up their bikes in the first turn, Weimer and Demuth were making hay.

So flashback to the first turn melee. Before Timmy picked up

his bike and after he dusted himself off from the wall collision he walked over to Reed and let him know that he was number one - if the number one means the middle finger on one hand fully extended. It was straight out of the wrestling ring for sure. Then the Chad was off and had to pass Short and Langston to help him out with the overall. His 250K was bye-bye at this point and so was the 100K for the win unless he got going.

And get going he did. He worked his way through the pack, passing all the way up to sixth and the overall if the race stayed the same. He got around Andrew Short by tripling in the turn before the start straight and went around the outside of Shorty. Which was all good except Shorty wasn't going quietly on this night. He might have with another rider but Short was already

back tyre and went down again! Chad Reed crashed as much in this 20-minute race as he did in all 16 rounds of the previous year's supercross series. So that was it, Reed's shot was officially gone and you know who was in position to win the 100 grand? None other then everybody's favourite tattooed parts guy - Josh Demuth! I wonder what the lady in the sports book at the MGM would've done if I had gone up there before the race and asked to bet on Josh Demuth to win. Punch me in the gut? Call security? The mind boggles with possibilities.

I couldn't believe what had happened, this race was getting crazier by the minute. Josh Demuth, a full-on privateer, was going to win the US Open. Chad Reed was picking himself off the ground what seemed like every three minutes and my buddy Tim Ferry was playing the role of Macho Man Randy Savage. It was nuts! Lost in all of this was Jake Weimer leading the race...on a 250F! Wish you guys could've been there, all this night was missing was dancing hippos and flying unicorns. I also half expected a car full of clowns to drive by at any second.



upset because the previous night Reed had told everybody that he "wasn't really trying" and was "just riding around". Short, in an uncharacteristic rant, told the media something to the effect that he hoped to give the leader some challenge and that Chad didn't have to say that. There was as much chance as Reed going around Short on the outside as me beating Lennox in the ring (who is actually Canadian, I know you English like to

Andrew Short and Chad Reed collided hard when Sho challenged Reed's pass attempt and they toppled over in a big wreck. Grant Langston came around just as they were both It was a crapicking up their bikes and when Reed got going he clipped GL's anytime soon.

As I'm sure you know, Demuth didn't win the US Open and that was a real bummer for sure. I really wanted the underdog to win but it was not to be as Michael Byrne crashed into a wall with six laps to go and handed Grant Langston the spot he needed to clinch the victory. It was probably meant to be as GL8 has been on a roll so much his name should be 'butter'. He added this victory to his just captured 450 outdoor title and the title of 'Most Well Rounded Motocross Rider In The World' sounds like it might suit him also. And congrats to Jake Weimer on winning the Main on Saturday night as well.

It was a crazy race that I won't forget about



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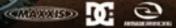














Words and hotos by Alex Hodgkinson

Yamaha are looking to the future and 'grooming' the next generation of GP stars with Nicolas Aubin and Davide Guarneri

dvance planning for the following season gets earlier and earlier each year and right at the front of the queue when it came to announcing their supported riders for 2008 this summer were Yamaha. But they also went one step further, announcing proudly that they were already 'grooming the next 'blue' generation for GP success' at Ricci Yamaha with contract renewals for Nico Aubin and Davide Guarneri.

It wasn't earth-shattering news at the time but when the French teenager and the 22-year-old Italian proceeded to win the next two MX2 GPs - at Loket and Namur - the opposition must have been wondering who it was in Amsterdam who had the crystal ball!

And the signings further emphasised the role of Ilario Ricci's team in Yamaha's global strategy, marking out the Modena-based team as the undisputed number one GP factory support team behind the factory ranks of YRRD. The attainment of this status has been the result of eight years of solid team-building for the 45-year-old race boss who explains his motivation simply but decisively.

"I raced myself and was two times Italian junior champion. I even rode GPs for two years on Honda but keep that quiet. Motocross is my passion! The first year I started off with Garcia Vico and Beggi. I actually bought everything that year but our successes brought the support of Yamaha Italia the following season and I have worked with most of Italy's top riders – Andrea Bartolini, Chicco Chiodi, Dini, Max Bartolini – as well as bringing Aaltonen and Gundersen into the team.

"But this year has been the most satisfying of all. The riders I had before like Andrea and Chicco had already been champions but to be successful with youngsters who have never won before is a special thrill. I really like the new move to work with young riders. It is a good feeling to be bringing new kids to the top.

"And it's a challenge. The experienced riders know what they want from the bike and you are expected to win but you need to work with the youngsters to find a good setting for them and it is a bigger reward, you feel more proud and excited when you win with them. It is a great motivation and brings a lot of passion.

"Davide has been with my team for three years now and his win in Namur was the reward for maintaining my belief in him despite all of the injuries. And Nico has fitted into the team quickly. I am sure he can be top three in the world next year. And I want to see both riders on the podium as often as possible!"

THE HARD WAY

If anyone thinks that kids have it too easy nowadays then listen hard to the tale of Nico Aubin's path to glory. Born and raised in Caen, the slenderly built 19-year-old has been riding since the age of five and put together a string of title successes through the Mini Verte (little green, as in grass) years as youth racing is known in Gallic quarters.

The boy from Normandy did start off on Kawasaki but also raced Honda too in the 65 class and he rode Yamaha and Suzuki in the 85s.

"There is very little support in the youth division in France. Even when you are champion you have to pay. The best you can hope for is that a bike shop will sell you two bikes at 50 per cent each. When you reach the juniors, that is the entry class to adult racing on 125s when you get to be a teenager. Sometimes you can get help from the importer for the bike but even then not for expenses.

"I have changed bike nearly every year – both in the youth and even at the GPs – looking for good material. I didn't want to have to keep changing and adapting but I had little choice. My father is just a normal worker.

He has a job with the electric board and we always had to buy the bikes, even the KTM I rode in the GPs last year. Right up until this year I have travelled to the races with my family in the camper but I'm not complaining. I enjoy that life. For some people it is important to have all the trimmings but I don't need a big truck. If I can get a good bike, a mechanic and a camper, that's okay for me.

"Suzuki did not have a programme for me when I went to the 125 and I got a deal with KTM France in 2003. The next year I was French junior champion and rode a few rounds of the European championship but I was determined to ride GPs in 2005 and KTM France didn't have a programme for me. They called the KTM factory too but they couldn't help. They wanted to keep me in France but not for the GPs.

"So I called Yamaha France and they didn't want to help me for the GP either, then Riccardo Boschi said he could help me if I was not so expensive. I paid my bike and JK was able to organise getting me into to the GPs."

You would expect that a 17-year-old who can race top 10 in his first year in GPs – as he showed in '05 at Matchams and St Jean – would attract a lot of interest. But France is not Britain.

"At then end of 2005 I spoke with TSM Kawasaki. That was the team of Christian Bayle, the team where the Pourcels had started. I signed for them but in February the team folded. Two months before the first GP. Great! All of the teams were full and I was so frustrated. I had worked so hard to get ready and suddenly I didn't even have a bike to train on. Nothing.

"But in one month a friend helped find lots of small sponsors to race Kawasaki, then three weeks before the first GP Kawasaki France said they couldn't help me either. I felt like chucking it all in. I had accepted that I would have to forget the GPs but then I got lucky. I am a good friend of Mickael Pichon and he helped me out. I stayed at his house for one month, he gave me a KTM for training and we rode together every day. I bought one more bike and me and my dad did the GPs all on our own last year — just the two of us, a camper and two bikes and spares."

Amazingly, top 10s at Matterley, Ernee and in Bulgaria still didn't have the teams knocking on the camper door so Nico took things in his own hands. "I spoke to llario in the paddock to ask him if anything was possible He was interested straight away but he already had Kenneth and Davide. And I was only 24th in the world last year – I just had one or two good results – but then things started to move. Yamaha France agreed to help out, Michele Rinaldi too and we worked out a deal for me as third rider. They took the chance on me and it worked out. Now I am really happy. Ilario is a good person, all the team are professional and friendly and I can finally concentrate full on my racing."

And Nico has rewarded Yamaha's faith by racing top 10 all year on all

And Nico has rewarded Yamaha's faith by racing top 10 all year on all types of track. "I don't have problems with any surface. You see that in my results. Of course I can ride hardpack and grass but my first top 10 was in the sand at Matchams and I was top 10 at Valkenswaard this year too. I rode good at Bellpuig in the mud but that is not unusual for anyone from Normandy and the hardpack at Faenza was also good. I think I am complete rider in this respect."













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Ricci Yamaha, from left, Davide Guarneri, Ilario Ricci and Nico Aubin





But Nico also identifies his Achilles' heel. "Some days I am really good, others not so. It is something I need to change and be more consistent. I don't know why it is. At the moment I am not consistent at the starts. Many times I can holeshot but other days I am back in the pack. In the years before I don't think my physical condition was so good. I was satisfied it was not so bad but perhaps I was not totally prepared."

His first win might even have come back in April when Nico led in Portugal until he suffered brainfade. "The clutch was getting so hot and I was trying to adjust it over every jump already on the first lap. But I was adjusting the clutch the wrong way. I don't know why. I wasn't nervous. It just happened."

So Nico's famous day came at the end of July when he became the first person other than Pourcel to take a GP off Cairoli all year.

"I already had a top 10 at Loket in 2005 but I don't like the track that much. I really don't know why I won there this year. I guess I just got out of bed on the right side. I didn't have such a good start in the qualifying race but I came through to second, then on Sunday I took two starts and all went well. Cairoli passed me quickly in the first moto. He was faster at first and I settled down in second place after watching his lines for a couple of laps. We soon had a good advantage over the rest and I tried not to use too much energy but I saw that Tony was not so much faster than me.

"I took the holeshot again the second race and if I could keep Tony behind me for three laps then I was confident I could win. After those three laps I pushed to open a gap and he made a mistake so I got a good lead. He started to come back at me but I was not going to let him pass me at the end after I had come so close. I could not accept defeat anymore, even though it was Tony behind me pushing for the win.

"I dug deep, no way was he going to come past me after I had led for so long. I went a little deeper in to the turns when he was right behind me but other than that I rode my own lines and believed that my speed was enough to keep him back."

So what is possible in 2008? "I have a good feeling with Yamaha. I knew even before the press release that they believed in Davide and me but it is a good feeling to know they have this confidence. When you know that the team and everyone in it is behind you 100 per cent it's a good feeling. There are no worries and you can get on with racing.

"For me top three should be possible but I will have to avoid the mistakes I have made this year. I need to be more consistent in the start. Perhaps even second is possible but it will be difficult to beat Cairoli. At the moment he is ahead of everyone but anything is possible. Certainly I am not afraid of him."

And after that? "I am certainly interested for America. Right now I am committed to two more years in Europe with Yamaha and if I attain my aims then I will go 2010 to the US. Perhaps I can be champion in 2009 but so many things can happen. I will work for it anyway."









CHAD'S LAD Davide Guarneri

I was first introduced to Davide by Chad Parker back in 2002. The legendary two-time world champion had already told me about his new protege weeks before he finally got a GP start. "Heh, I found a mountain boy and he can ride a bike. He's just 17 and I have to bust my ass to catch him some days!"

just 17 and I have to bust my ass to catch him some days!"

Davide laughed as I recalled Chad's words. "Yes, it is true, I am from the mountains. I live in a village called Darfo Boario Terme, about 1000 metres above sea level. Bergamo is the closest city about one hour away.

"I started racing in 1994 and in 2000 I moved to the 125 junior. That was when I

"I started racing in 1994 and in 2000 I moved to the 125 junior. That was when I started riding all over Italy in the Junior Cup. I won it in 2001 and in 2002 I won the junior world championship. Claudio, my mechanic in 2001/2002, was the same guy who had worked for Chad when he first came to Europe. I was Yamaha then too and Chad was KTM but Chad was living about 40 kilometres from me at Brescia and we would meet up sometimes at the training tracks.

"Chad is a little crazy but a great guy. He was getting towards the end of his GP career when I was coming up but he was still so enthusiastic. I knew my own track like the back of my hand and sometimes I could be faster than him and he wasn't satisfied until he had picked up my lines and could go faster than me. By the end of the day I was learning new lines from him. It was a good time for both of us. Chad is now back in America and has opened up a ranch to teach the kids. And he is still racing. Last year he won the veteran at Loretta Lynn's, this year at Ponca City.

"I switched to KTM for 2003 and I got a start in the fifth GP at Teutschenthal and immediately took a 10th place. It was fantastic to have Chad with me when I started the GPs. He could explain so much to me – about the gate, the rhythm, concentration, everything, he has so much experience. A crazy guy but so fast and so enthusiastic

"I had a good first year but then I got many injuries the next couple of years.
Fortunately never a big injury but many injuries to keep me out for several weeks
and stop my progression. I was so unlucky. Many injuries I didn't even crash. I would
turn my knee in a rut, things like that. I broke fingers, both knees and this year the
ankle at the start of the season. And last year I had a virus too and had no power.
My lap times were good but not the results.

"But llario and Yamaha have continued to speak good for me and that is good for my confidence to know they believe in me. I tried racing at Mantova in February with the ankle broken but it was no good. I had to miss the first three GPs but llario continued to believe in me."

And, although never centre stage before Namur, that win at the world's most famous track was perhaps not so much of a surprise because every week Davide was having one good moto, just never two on one day.



All smiles on the podium with Antonio Cairoli – two years ago they were scrapping!





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"I lost two months of physical preparation and the world championship is hard. Every rider has good condition and I am still trying to catch up. Even now, later in the summer, I can push hard for one moto but two is difficult. But I had been making small progression every week. "Namur was fabulous. I had crashed in the start with Pourcel and Cairoli but

"Namur was fabulous. I had crashed in the start with Pourcel and Cairoli but I was jumping everything. I think I was the only one jumping the downhill double in the trees. I had such a good feeling and finished fourth. In the second moto too. I was behind Antonio and Pourcel and I felt so good, as though they were holding me up. I knew I could pass them and I did but when I passed them I was finished. Then my mechanic signalled me that I was winning the GP and I was happy with third."

Like many Italians, Davide sees his future in the GPs. "I am not so interested to make a career in America but I am curious to make some races there. I don't like the way the tracks are built here. They make them too slow, not enough flow, the ground is too heavy and the tracks are too short. I like the fast, sweeping track and also it would be better if the tracks were longer. They would not get so cut up if we didn't race so many laps. That's why I like Namur. There are lots of corners but it is not slow. In fact it is a very fast track, even through the trees. Express!

is not slow. In fact it is a very fast track, even through the trees. Express! "And the shorter tracks are very bad for qualifying. One mistake and you lose many places but on a longer track you can win that time back."

Davide's playing his cards very close to his chest for '08 and prefers not to make predictions. "I want to be consistent but I don't want to talk about numbers yet. The most important thing for me is to get through the winter without any injuries. If I do that I am sure I can race for the top three at least in many GPs.

Top three in the series is more difficult because you must be so consistent but I think I can fight for the podium at many races. Perhaps not always, perhaps you don't like one track, maybe the sand is too deep and I have to go for less."

And if he's being cagey about next year he's revealing even less about '09 and a possible move to MX1. "I don't want to think about 2009 yet. I like the 250. I am a racer and I still get a kick out of racing. I have no problem with a 450. I have been training once a week for the Nations and I like the big bike. It is difficult to learn the different power, you must learn to ride more quieter and I think I have a good style for the 450. I am not so aggressive anymore and I am quite big physically.

"On the 450 you need to push for two laps, then to ride smooth to save energy to push again at the end. In MX2 everyone is still fighting all race. When I see another rider before me I want to pass him, I want to push and fight but the correct fight with fair passes. I like real motocross, motocross is to pass cleanly, not to hit and push another rider out of the track."

The sight of GP winner Davide and red plate holder Cairoli celebrating together on the podium at Namur was a strange sight even for those with not such long memories. In a famous incident during the qualifier for the French GP in 2005, just one week after a mid-air collision at Matchams, Davide was inadvertently shunted into Cairoli by Tony's team-mate Claudio Federici and the champion-to-be was disqualified from the GP for kicking his rival as he lay on the ground

"We are still not big friends but it is okay now. He kicked me in the head, remember? I don't go looking for him to have a chat but I can talk to him now if our paths cross."



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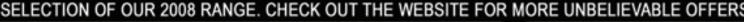






























medical milway

Alan Milway is a qualified sports scientist who runs MX Fitness specialising in training motocross and enduro riders.

When it co es to getting race fit in the gy can do a lot worse than sticking your oar in...

PREPARING YOURSELF to race physically demanding motos or enduro events involves both increasing your cardiovascular capabilities so you can go faster for longer and also improving your muscular strength and fatigue resistance for better control on the bike for longer. We can all put in a fast lap on the practice track but being able to continually replicate this takes not only a lot of practice but also good physical conditioning.

Busy day-to-day schedules for the majority of us and lack of time for training means that any time actually spent at the gym is often approached a little blindly. What should I actually be doing? What is most effective? Am I wasting my time working on this machine or in this way?

Stripping back the packaging of a gym environment and trying to find the best equipment to use is often easier said than done - but if there is one piece of equipment to head for in a time of need then the rowing machine ranks right up there as one of the best for MX training. The biomechanical movements involved, the energy systems recruited and the muscle groups exercised all lead to rowing being a great 'one-stop' exercise for greatly improved performance on the bike.

The first plus point to using the rowing machine is that it trains both the upper and lower body muscles - as you forcibly extend the legs in the drive phase of the stroke to push the seat back and pull the handle you work all the major muscle groups of the legs as you push. The trunk is required to stay stable and strong to anchor the upper body in a neutral position as the legs extend - this recruits the core muscles of the stomach and lower back (much as you require these muscles to keep you centred and with good posture on the motorbike). As the legs reach extension the upper back and arms pull the handle through towards the chest. Add a slight extension of the lower back at the end of the stroke and you have a fantastic all-over body workout.

The rowing action is also specific to the actions performed on the bike

although at first glance it may not seem that way. It may help to imagine replacing the handle with a set of Renthals - the action is very similar indeed and uses the same muscle groups. This kind of training develops the co-ordination of the muscles used to improve efficiency and technique. As you ride the bike lap after lap your upper back and chest become fatigued from the repeated movements and the contractions involved in keeping your position on the bike (these are known as isometric contractions). Working against a force on the rowing machine helps replicate this and closely mimics the fatigue - ideal training when you can't get to a track mid-week or after work.

When we look to improve our fitness we often split training into two distinct areas - cardio training and strength training. For example, riding a stationary bike in the gym is a great way to raise heart rate, keep it elevated within close boundaries (monitored by heart rate or power output) and sustain this for a prolonged period. This helps improve blood flow to the muscles, improve the efficiency of the muscles to use this blood and get rid of 'waste products' to effectively provide the necessary energy output required. However, if we want to improve the overall strength of the muscles of the legs we would look to incorporate weights training to isolate these muscles and try and increase their size and strength through exercises such as leg presses or squats.

Where rowing comes into its own again is that because there is a variable resistance available on the rope/chain and our body weight acts as a resistance to a certain degree, the movement itself is challenging and very fatiguing and often this fatigue is caused by a build-up of lactic acid in the muscles, not by a more general 'exhaustion'. This means that not only are the upper and lower body muscles trained for endurance but they are also trained for strength - especially the legs, upper back and arms.



The 2000m row is a widely accepted test to gauge fitness and as it is done on a simple piece of equipment it allows us to compare and contrast times between different sportsmen. Set the machine to countdown from 2000m and set the resistance to level six to seven. If you have a heart rate monitor this is a good time to measure your maximum heart rate.

The exercise itself is a simple time trial against the clock to row out the 2000m as fast as possible. Technique is important as slow, more powerful strokes are much more efficient than very fast but weak strokes. Also with practice you will be able to more effectively recruit your legs. As a guideline eight minutes is probably a 'good' average time, seven-and-a-half minutes shows good initial levels of fitness and as you approach seven minutes you are getting to a very good level. For those of you who can break the seven-minute barrier this shows impressive levels of fitness and is the kind of time a well trained club rower would look to get.

As a point of interest the world record for 2000m indoor rowing is 5mins 37secs. Email me your 2000m row times and I will start a 'leaderboard' on my site MXFitness.co.uk to compare the fittest riders in the country!

As you complete the row – you should be at exhaustion and have given it full effort - look at your heart rate monitor and see what your heart is doing! It will be near to its maximum. This figure can be used to set future training levels so is well worth noting. I should say that this exercise/test is obviously strenuous on the heart so if you have not sat on a rowing machine before or been in a gym for years it is not recommended as the first thing you do...

At the recent Loretta Lynn's amateur championships a stand was set up to test riders over 500m. Although not as good an overall test due to it's short duration it does give a snapshot as to fitness and power levels. The results were very interesting as Travis Pastrana topped the list in an impressive time of 1min 28sec! Also impressive was that the list of competitors included riders such as Ricky Carmichael (1min 35secs), Ben Townley (1min 32secs) and many other current racers. This goes a way to show his natural physical fitness, the benefit of height in this exercise (taller people have a large biomechanical advantage in rowing) and perhaps hint that it's not all rally cars and backflips for the man from Maryland...

Rowing offers a great workout for riders with no impact stress on the joints. The only thing to be wary of is poor technique that can lead to a sore lower back so seek advice if you are new to this exercise. Rowers can also be bought for use at home and are ideal to get in a good, relevant workout that will help you go faster and further come the weekend!



SAMPLE TRAINING

Workout 1

After finding out your maximum heart rate from the 2000m race work out 75 per cent of this.

- 1) Warm up for 1000m at a steady rate focusing on technique drive initially with the legs while keeping the back straight, then pulling through with the arms to finish.
- 2) Raise the effort level to 75 per cent of maximum and sustain for 4000m.
- As you progress try to reduce the strokes per minute figure while trying to keep the split time on the screen the same.

This will gradually improve power output.

Workout 2

Warm up with a steady 1000m row.

- Then 500m at near to full effort (90 per cent max heart rate or near to maximum speed as shown by split time on screen).
- 2) After 500m back down to a steady effort for the next 500m.
- Repeat four times.
- 4) As you progress you can gradually increase the distance for the 'efforts' or reduce the strokes per minute while keeping output the same (to increase power output).

Test yourself periodically with a 2000m row race to monitor progress – you will be surprised at how quickly the times improve!

P-P-P-POP IN A PISTON!

Fitting two-stroke pistons is al ost as easy as popping Rich Tea or chocolaty Penguin biscuits down your throat - Wakker shows us how!

Words by Geoff Walker Photos by Sutty

A COUPLE of months ago I took a closer look at one of the most popular bikes in our sport – the KTM SX65. Since then I've had a bunch of emails from keen dads asking just what engine tuning I'd recommend they do to help little Jimmy crack the top six of the Junior class at his local track.

In my experience these bikes are already more than fast enough for most of the nippers who race them and without making them more difficult

to ride or less reliable the best thing you can do to keep them pumping out the maximum amount of ponies is to keep on top of your top end rebuilds.

If you've never replaced the piston and rings in a two-stroke motocross bike you may think it's a tough job but if you work in a methodical manner, in a nice tidy environment and use the right tools for the job then it's really not that tough. Here's how to do it...









001 Whip the seat off using the quick release jobby whatsit.

002 Disconnect the fuel line and then remove the one fixing bolt for the fuel tank.

003 Now take off the tank and see if it fits on your head. If it fits comfortably you can keep it on until it's time to refit it to the bike later, if it doesn't fit it so well because you are a large-nappered Oirishman then clean it and put it to one side.

004 The area in which you're going to work needs to be clean so give it a good going over to ensure there's no loose crud that can drop into your motor.

005 Pop the springs off your front pipe and undo the bolts before slipping it off and putting it somewhere safe.

006 Find a suitable vessel then locate the drain plug on the water pump cover (it's the one with the copper washer). Loosen the plug and allow

the contents of the cooling system to flow freely into it – removing the radiator cap will help increase flow and ensure you get it all out.

007 Remove all the hoses from the cylinder and head. If they're stuck on there give them a little twist.

008 Now remove the plug cap and spark plug

009 There's absolutely no need to remove the head when changing the piston on the KTM 65

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so unless you really wanna do it leave it on there. Loosen then remove the four cylinder nuts in a criss-cross pattern. Be extra careful when moving with the bracket for the hydraulic clutch pipe as you don't wanna kink or split this item — that would be bad!

010 Now use the kickstart lever to drop the piston to the lowest point or Bottom Dead Centre – BDC as we call it in the trade. Slowly remove the cylinder and base gasket then slip in a piece of clean lint-free rag or paper roll onto the top

of the open motor to stop any crapola going in there.

011 Using a pair of small point-nose pliers carefully remove one of the circlips that holds the gudgeon pin in position. Push the gudgeon pin out from the opposite side to the circlip you removed and then remove the piston. Before you fit your new piston you should lightly oil then fit the rings and one circlip. Rings are always marked to indicate which way up they should be fitted – always check your manual so you know

exactly which way is right. The best way to fit the ring is to start by slipping one end of the ring into position then simply run your finger around the top of the ring until it slips into place. Check that the ring moves freely in and out of the ring groove when they're fitted.

012 Place the piston onto the small end where your new and freshly oiled small end bearing has been fitted into the conrod. Fit the gudgeon pin and carefully fit the second circlip into its groove. Make sure both clips are securely fitted.

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013 Fit the new base gasket then get ready to refit the cylinder. Lightly coat the piston and cylinder with two-stroke oil and then hold the rings in a fully compressed position. Now lower the cylinder onto the piston making sure the rings are lined up with locating peg. Sometimes it's good to have a friend with you at this point — that's assuming you've got a friend — to doubly make sure everything is A-okay!

014 When the cylinder is in place hold the top down and slowly turn the engine over using your hand on the kickstart lever. Make sure everything's operating smoothly. Now you can refit the cylinder nuts – don't forget the bracket for the clutch pipe. Always tighten in this pattern – front right, rear left, rear right, front left.

015 With the cylinder tightened down refit the

spark plug, plug cap, radiator hoses and exhaust before refilling the radiator with coolant. Take your time to refill it as you must be sure there are no air leaks in the system.

016 Now slap in a clean air filter and refit the tank and seat before draining the carb. Now you should be good to go on a nice and steady half-hour break-in ride.

SANDS OF TIME It's been 25 years since the annual festival of pain known as the Weston Beach Race first unleashed otorcycle ayhe on the So erset sands... Words and photos by Jack Burnicle AS RACE

THE UK off-road world's annual end-of-season beach bonanza celebrated its silver jubilee at Weston-super-Mare last month. The original epic, inspired by the French masterpiece at Le Touquet, was concocted by a contrasting quartet of unlikely entrepreneurs.

Gruff George Greenland had won the sidecar class at Le Touquet in February 1983. The event had also been attended by wisecracking, big-chinned Lancastrian Jack Mathews and Brummie Dave Smith, a riders' agent, organiser, commentator and fan.

according to the benign local bobbies 35,000 fans flocked into town come Sunday morning.

The parc ferme that novel first year was located in an industrial estate on the edge of Weston and the whole throbbing mixture of solos, sidecars and trikes rumbled through a trembling town centre, past the imposing frontage of race HQ at the Atlantic Hotel and dropped on to the beach for a traditional Le Mans start.

This feature originated at the Le Mans 24-Hour car race (another mad French invention!) and involved the riders lining



Together with affable West Country sidecar enduro rider Eddie Chandler they formed Enduro Promotions and sought out a cooperative local council with a handy beach to spare. That proved to be Weston-super-Mare in Eddie's homeland in the autumn of '83.

Sadly, neither Eddie nor the vastly entertaining maverick

Mathews survived to enjoy the 25th anniversary of their brainchild but George — who traditionally hung out the chequered flag — and 'Smithy' were among this year's special guests.

Actually, literally inspired by 'Enduro du Touquet', Weston beach race originally saddled itself with a preposterous pseudo-French appendage. And on a raw, windy weekend we all motored down past Bristol to this majestically faded seaside resort for the inaugural 'Enduro du Super Mare'!

Weston echoed to the riotous night-time racket of happy bikers. Saturday

evening's competitors disco at the Winter Gardens degenerated into merry over-indulgence and a bracing trip back to our hotel in the back of DBR editor Dave Calderwood's pick-up truck!

The track, engineered by Greenland and 250 GP star Dave Watson, always looked likely to favour the motocrossers. Walking round on a beautiful twilight Saturday afternoon, Honda's enduro king Derrick Edmondson expressed apprehension at a series of whoops dug out of wet sand while 500 GP motocrosser Willie Simpson looked forward to rattling across them full-bore!

A couple of early-evening slots on Harlech television the previous week must have aroused the local populace because up opposite their steeds, running at the drop of a flag, then starting up and taking off. Simpson fluked it with amiable Scottish aplomb. Not content with having a leak alongside his 500cc Husqvarna before lining up, 'Oor Wullie' returned to the bike. "I wanted to trip the speedo and see how many kilos we did," he explained later. "The starting flare went up when I was

halfway back to the line of riders. I ran to the bike, she fired up first kick and I was away!"

Not so fortunate was Watson, eventually pushed off at the back of the field by his dad Robert! Multiple British motocross champ Vic Allan fared better after colluding with Mitsui Yamaha's genial giant Steve Goodyear. They parked their TT600s side-by-side and brick-built Steve clamped Haggis' bike firmly between his mighty thighs while the little Scot fired her up!

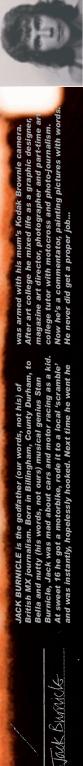
Simpson was first to erupt over the fast, man-made jumps towards the finishing line amid great collective

gasps of astonishment from the tightly-packed crowd lining the promenade wall. Two hundred yards behind Brian Higgins (Maico) led four-stroke champ Dave Tomasik on a howling 500 KTM stroker, ebullient youngster Rob Andrews on a big-tanked 250 Yam – fated to run out of fuel! – and Vic Allan.

Tomasik's was a particularly remarkable first lap. The Herefordshireman had never seen the track before the start because he and sponsor Gordon Jones were typically late leaving home! Watson lay an equally extraordinary 64th having overtaken approximately 436 rivals but bedlam beset the distant dunes...

"The second lap was a joke," said 1981 world 250 champion Neil Hudson who was 13th on that opening circuit.

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"The first turn at the end of the start straight must have had 400 bikes all over it. If you were in the right place when the ropes went down you just rode through!" Another incredulous motocrosser made a similar point. "It's the enduro riders who cheat right away! Eddy (Edmondson) and Geraint Jones were straight under the ropes!"

Yet another cheerfully livid motocrosser later recounted how he'd powered past legendary old warhorse Arthur Browning along the straight. "When I set off into all the deep stuff at the far end I could see Arthur over to my left tearing along the flat, hard sand behind the bleedin' spectators. He missed out the first three loops, then I had to catch him all over again!"

Hudson's breathed-on 490 Yamaha consistently hit the ton along the exhilarating mile-long straight while Allan's thundering TT600 took an extravagant line way out by the sea-edge, reverberating through shimmering plumes of spray like some early 1920s land speed record attempt on Pendine Sands. "Well, I did have to pull all the baffles out after scrutineering, otherwise she wouldnae have gone at all," grinned 'the Vicar' gleefully.

Equally enthralling was the bestial shriek of British sidecarcross champions (and eventual winners) Terry Good and Gary Withers' 1000cc Yamaha-engined Wasp.

It's difficult to realise today but we'd never witnessed this mayhem before on the unassuming shoreline of a quaintly Edwardian English resort full of retired gentlefolk.

"I was enjoying it so much as I raced along the straight that I was laughing out loud to maself," smiled Simpson later.

Shrewd engineer Hudson's work on his Yamaha had been simple. "We geared her right up with an enormous front sprocket and fitted a 600 mill Mikuni jet," explained the quiet local man. "It pinked like hell in third but once in fourth it just went and went." Tomasik's Katoom was hardly any slower but couldn't quite match the ex-world champ. "Nellie had a main jet for a 1000 in a 500," gasped 'The Dog'. "It was like drilling a one-inch hole up it. And she was rich!"

She also stopped with ignition problems 20 minutes from the chequered flag while Tomasik's KTM careered on, though the throttle got



a bit sticky. "She was balls-out and wouldn't shut off!" She was also in contention for a famous victory.

Excitement mounted as the two-hour finale approached. All the front-runners except Simpson made a late second pit stop for fuel, enabling 'Oor Wul' to notch up a vital, extra 27th lap that clinched victory when the finishing flare exploded. Tomasik had to settle for a barnstorming second ahead of another KTM in the hands of suave local country gent Adrian Wilmott and Mitsui Yamaha's Hampshire lad Kevin Froud.

Loss of computer lapscoring (following the ill-timed bankruptcy of the proposed supplier a week before the race!) forced distressed race secretary Dave Smith to admit defeat and confess that a sheet of hand-scored 'hit-and-miss' results would be mailed to all competitors. Dave Watson's mum Edith, whose invaluable and accurate lapscoring I could vouch for from countless MX GPs, had her son on 26 laps and a rostrum candidate but possibly due to losing his Camel race bib (many of which were whipped off by the vicious headwind on the main straight) Dave was officially only credited with 22 tours.

"It could have gone another hour," reckoned Watson. And from 1984 it duly did, Davey's own winning turn coming a year later in 1985!

Willie Simpson's crucial extra lap subsequently became a source of conjecture. The resourceful Scot and his hardy Husqvarna had allegedly run dry out on the course and been topped up courtesy of a spectator's bike trackside. If true, Willie's ingenuity would surely have been admired by the man with most to lose, he and Dave Tomasik both enterprising men capable of creative solutions to practical problems.

As well, of course, as being the sort of effervescent enthusiasts who have made Weston the breath of bike-wrecking fresh air we've come to love these past 25 autumns...





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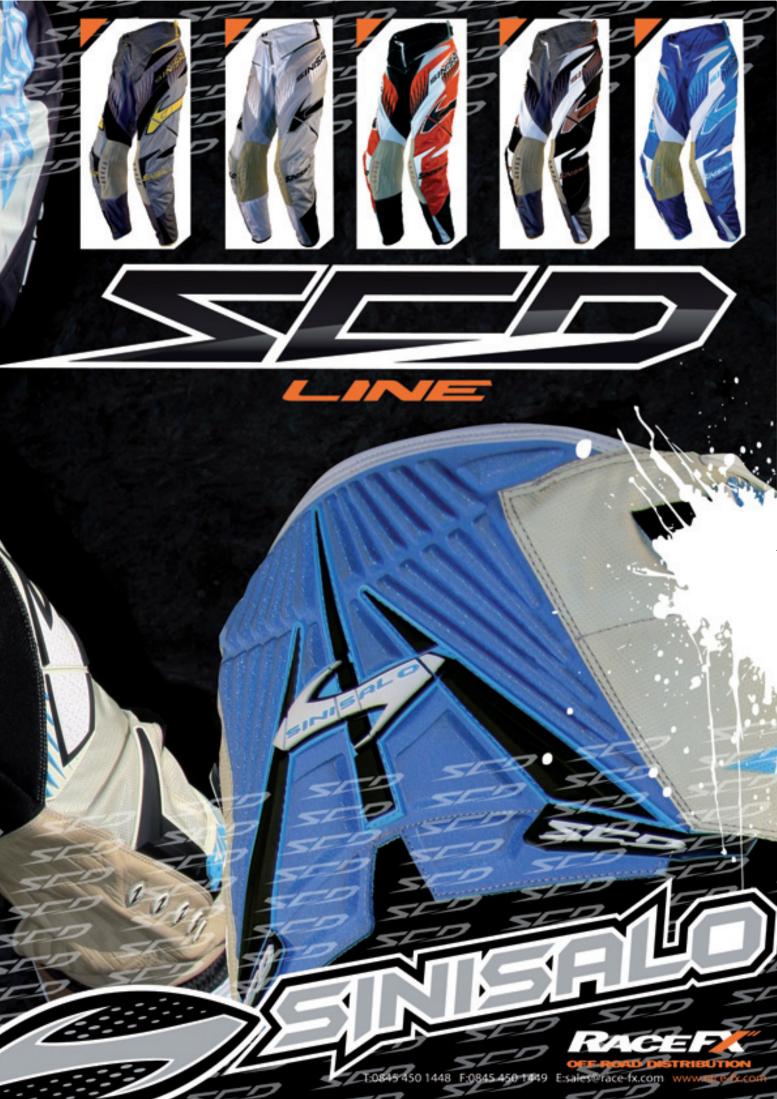




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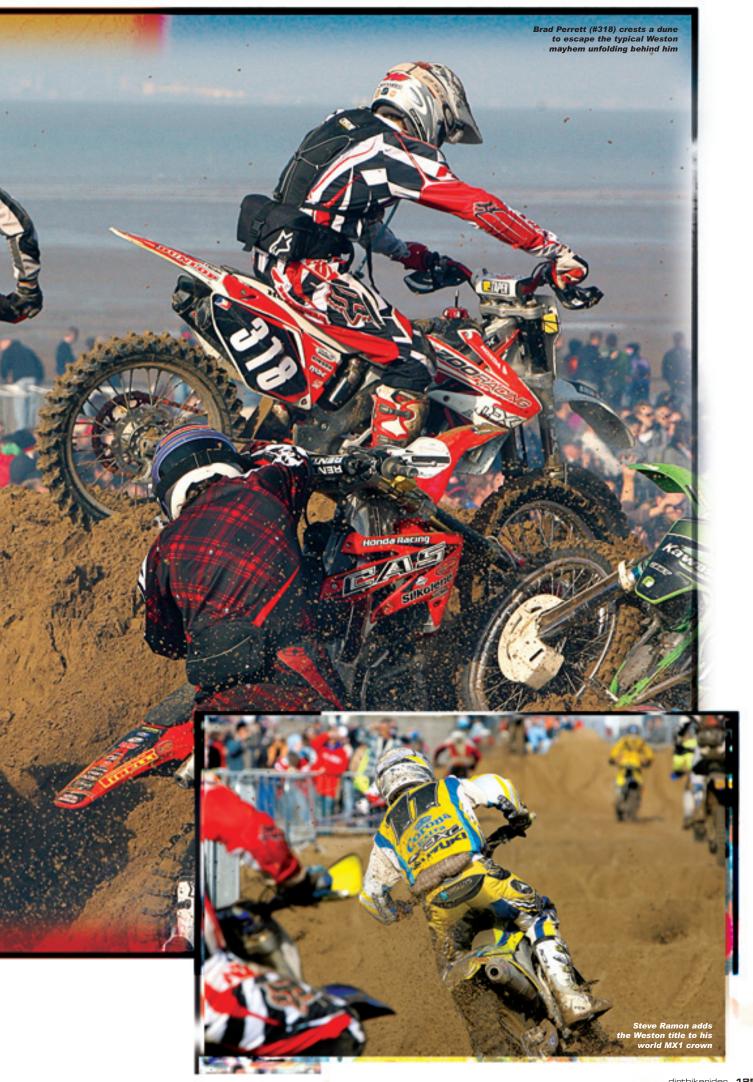






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VERY FEW years in an almost unique occurrence vast hordes of lemmings head to the coast of Norway and throw themselves to their own doom in an orgy of incomprehensible, self-inflicted suffering. Nowhere else in the animal kingdom does any other species go to such masochistic lengths for no conceivable reward – nature is all programmed for survival of the species and self-harm is not in the game plan, unless there's some ridiculous bounty to earn.

However, every rule has an exception...

Every year, hordes of people who really should know better head down to Somerset where – in a three-hour frenzy of destruction – over 1,000 of 'em attempt to grind their bikes and their bodies into a brightly-coloured, sweat-flavoured puddle of pain. For everyone not on a factory bike the event will leave them hurting, some of them injured, with bikes scarred and tattered by the ordeal. But despite the lack of obvious positives there'll still be a queue to get in next year, subscribers to Mallory's 'because it's there' philosophy regarding climbing Mount Everest. To most people the idea of attempting an event like the Weston Beach Race may seem unutterably alien but to many it's a challenge to which they're drawn like moths to a candle. And that's just the solos on Sunday – some real nutters do it on quads and sidecars too...

There's even drama before the race this year – with Weston preparing to celebrate its 25th anniversary a world-class line-up is in the programme but with just days to go events conspire to trim the entry list a little. David Knight and Stefan Everts are scheduled to re-enact their battle of last year but Knighter gets yanked out of it by KTM at the last minute. Brought to the USA to retain the GNCC crown for the orange team, the Manxman has the championship in sight but can still mathematically be beaten so he's withdrawn from Weston to avoid the risk of injuring himself out of the end of the cross country series. As for Stefan...bizarrely, the Belgian legend ends up double-booked – a contestant on a reality TV show, its postponement and subsequent re-schedule mean a clash with the beach race and for once the bikes lose out. The Euro GOAT will not be appearing at Weston this year...

But as disappointing as it is for the winners of '06 and '04 not to be present to renew their battle (Paul Edmondson, who is close to being a permanent fixture at the event, won in '05), there are still some big names in the mix – Fast Eddy will be there, of course, as will be Brad Anderson who's quickly building a reputation as a great beach racer. But also appearing will be Josh Coppins, fit enough once more to throw down the gauntlet to MX1 world champion Steve Ramon.

Josh's push for victory, however, does not get off to the brightest of starts – delayed at the airport for hours as he waits for his gear bags to appear, by the time he makes it to his hotel his room has already been booked out to (of all the people on the face of the planet) Steve Ramon – if a dictionary definition of "adding insult to injury" is required, this is it! Fortunately for the Lizzard, with time and hotel rooms in short supply, Fro System's on-hand rider support Mikey Brueford – a long-time Weston native – steps up to the plate to put the champion elect up for the night.

But before the solos can steal all the Sunday glory there's other business to attend to – Paul Winrow charges out of the gate to take a big lead in the quad race on Saturday but a lengthy stop to change a wheel drops him back towards Jeremy Warnia. But the Frenchman then also hits his own mechanical problems, leaving the stocky North Easterner free to join the list of Weston greats

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with his fourth victory, placing his name in lights alongside veteran multi-winners David Knight and Rob Meek. Warnia's the only rider to stay on the lead lap with Carl Bunce back in third.

The Sunday morning youth races see similar domination with Ben Southward coming close to lapping the whole field in the 65 class with just Corie Southwood staying on the same lap and Callan Cooper a lap in arrears. Scott Elderfield is the predictable class of the 85 field with Jake Milward and Steve Holcombe following him home.

But the anticipation is all about the solos. The incredible massed start kicks off about 15 minutes early with the new holeshot award going to CAS Honda's Mike Brown – the American has geared his bike to be super-quick on the straight but the strategy only just pays off and costs him in terms of general usability and when the bike starts making funny noises he decides discretion is the better part of valour and pulls out. In the meantime, Da Bomb – on his lightweight factory Suzook with the big aluminium sand-GP fuel tank – is easing away from the rest of the pack. Once Brownie drops out it's between Coppins and Ando on more standard bikes for second but the durable Kiwi has the measure of Bad Brad and is closing on Ramon heading into the closing stages.

Then, however, Weston throws a spanner into everybody's works – all day long one of the trickier obstacles has been the tunnel jump, just after Sir Jack's vantage point. With the track being drier than normal the grainy beach sand on the wooden boards of the tunnel jump make it very much like riding on marbles and everyone's struggling to climb the up ramp. As the clock runs down the decision's made to end the race early on safety grounds – the only way of relieving the queue is to open the fences to allow the riders around it but this means they're riding right through the crowd and across the only way in and out of the infield for

RESULTS

3	0105				
1	Steve Ramon	(450 Suzuki)	14 lap		
2	Josh Coppins	(450 Rinaldi Yamaha)	14		
3	Brad Anderson	(450 Pioneer Yamaha)	14		
4	Timotei Potisek	(450 Honda)	14		
5	Ashley Greedy	(250 PAR Homes Honda)	14		
6	Jamie Lewis	(450 Hockey Honda)	14		
7	Finbarr Kneafsey	(450 Bake n' Bite Hockey Honda)	14		
8	Rob Meek	(450 PAR Lings Honda)	14		
9	Nick Life	(450 Yamaha)	14		
10	Rick Du-Feu	(250 Delkevic Kawasaki)	13		
4					
Quade					

1	Paul Winrow	(450 Winrow Honda)	20 laps
2	Jeremy Warnia	(450 Suzuki France)	20
3	Carl Bunce	(450 Anderson ATV Suzuki)	19

Sidecars

	(=0=14/1/14/14/14/14/14/14/14/14/14/14/14/14	
Andrew/Davey	(525 Walsh-Newton KTM)	16 laps
Dow/Hutchman	(555 SLKTVPT)	15
Eastman/Kirwin	(580 Horse Fly KTM VMC)	15
		Dow/Hutchman (555 SLKTVPT)

Alun Joyce lets off steam!



vehicles, including ambulances.

So the chequers are thrown early, bringing a premature end to proceedings and gift-wrapping the win for Steve Ramon ahead of Coppins and Ando.

It's a shame that the 25th anniversary event should end on a slightly damp note but no decision made in the interests of safety should ever really be subject to heavy criticism and it doesn't detract from what is an absolute classic event on the sporting calendar. That's not to say the event is above criticism - and there's been quite a bit of it on the internet message boards for various reasons - but it has a mad glory to it that makes it unique. As long as the entry is full and people queue to get in then Weston will remain the quirky king of season-closing events.







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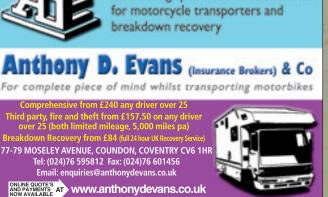
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DOUSTED

MASTERS SERIES FINISH IN STYLE...

With rounds four and five hot on the heels of each other there has been a burst of late season activity for the British Masters. With both Robbie Muscat and Mel Pocock still out injured it left both the Small Wheel and Youth 125cc divisions there for the taking...

Mel's younger sibling Brad stamped his authority all over the event at Matchams with three thumping race wins in the Small Wheels before following it up with another race win at Foxhill to snatch the championship spoils – well done Brad.

Dan Thornhill put in yet another impressive display at Foxhill, taking two race wins to claim the overall win on the day. Also well done to Luke Norris and Ben Howell for nailing second and third places down in the final standings with a season of consistent results.

Richie Worrlal did enough at Matchams Park with third overall to retain his lead in the

Big Wheel 85cc section but he was overshadowed on the weekend by the flying Hutchinsons (not related). James took two race wins and Dan the other with James just pinching the overall by a single point from Dan.

Luke Hawkins made a brilliant return to form taking two race wins at the final round at Foxhill but in the battle for the championship James Hutchinson took the other race win and the overall on the weekend with another single-point victory. Despite this, Richie Worrall's efforts with a 3-2-2 race card were more than enough to crown him Masters champion for 2007.

Lewis King put in an absolutely stunning display over the last two rounds with six race wins ending his youth racing days with a well-deserved championship title. Not having had the best of luck in either the BYMX or MXY2 championships, Lewis seemed to save his best form for this year's Masters event.

Tom Watts ended up as series runner-up with David Games doing brilliantly on the two-stroke to just edge out Jack Hawes for third. Despite Jack throwing everything at it with second overall at Foxhill he just lost out to David by one point.

Okay so it wasn't Hawkstone Park as promised but with a lot of feverish activity and a little bit of Paul Daniels-like magic – maybe even a bit of Jack Daniels-like magic for the organisers – the Severn Valley MC pulled a right rabbit from the hat for the final round of the BYMX series. A glorious piece of undulating, super-fast, hardpack MX circuitry draped over a Gloucestershire hillside within sight of the M5 was what greeted the riders at Brookthorpe.

With so much on the line the champions in waiting – that's Ben Watson (65cc), Matthew Fleming (SW85cc), Sam Davis (BW85cc) and Alex Rockwell (Premier) – wasted no time and all wrapped up their titles on day one. They all came to the event with leads ranging from seriously healthy to absolutely in the pink and unless a natural disaster akin to a flood of epic proportions or a plague of locusts struck there was no way any of these riders were going home without the champion's silverware.

The weekend's racing still had many memorable moments though as Tom Neal did all he could to wrestle a race win from Ben Watson in his best showing of the season and but for a close look at the dirt in race four he might have just nicked one at the death. Tom was more than happy with second overall on the weekend though.

Ben just does what he does best - that's win races in style. There were other gutsy performances on the day from Jack Heath who secured the runner-up place in the championship, more bad luck though for Callan Cooper again dogged by machinery problems - this time braking - and he had to settle for third.

With the SW85 championship destined for Fife in the hands of Matthew Fleming it was Dan Thornhill with another blistering set of races who stole the show in this class. With three emphatic race wins and a second place finish, Dan looked impressive as he grabbed second in the championship from Scott Aldridge in the absence of the injured Robbie Muscat. In the second half of the season Dan really has produced the goods and on hardpack Dan's the man and he rules okay!

Luke Dean also caught the eye with his special brand of action aboard the Relentless Suzuki while Jamie McCanney struggled with a misfiring engine on day one.

Sam Davis has been magnificent for most of the season and he was again in race four as he tore through the chequered flag in first place to bring the curtain down on his championship-winning season.

Prior to that however he had to give sway - well he had no choice really - to Redline KTM runner Josh Spinks who with three thumping race wins and a second showed just how good he is on the hard stuff. The pair had Connor Walkley to contend with too and all three guys put on a classic show in race three with just fractions between them in a blanket finish as Josh took the chequers and Connor held off Sam in possibly the best Big Wheel race of the season.

After losing the Elite 125cc championship in the very last race to David Games, Lewis Tombs could not possibly do it again could he? Well it looked like he might at one point as David Games lead the final race of the day and Lewis was struggling mid pack - "riding like a wet lettuce" is what he said afterwards.

At this point the championship was in the balance, David could do no more than win the race and that's exactly what he did and the overall too on the weekend. Meanwhile, Lewis was fighting his way through and clear of the pack into sixth place and the championship was his after a nervy race but well-deserved after his season of blood, sweat and tears!

Let's not forget Scott James. Two cracking race wins and a ride through the field to rival the best of the season. Together with David Games the two Welsh guys were a

Alex Rockwell needed just one decent result and although a little ring rusty after a long lay-off he did more than enough by finishing in second place on the weekend to sign off his youth racing days with the biggest prize of all. Stick it on the mantlepiece Alex – BYMX Premier champion.

Back on the track all eyes were on the expected bun fight between Matt Moffat and Lewis King for the second spot. The expected three-way battle had been reduced to a duet as Mel Pocock missed out on all the fun sadly injured.

The expected battle fizzled out a bit though as Matt bulldozed his way to three rampaging race wins on the Eurotek KTM with the other race win going to Jack Hawes who is showing some superb end-of-season form.





Jack Hawes narrowly misses out on a third place in the Masters series



CONNOR WALKLEY

DOB:

09/06/94 HOMETOWN:

Caerphilly, South Wales STARTED RACING:

2000

NATIONAL SUCCESS:

2005

65cc BSMA champion 65cc BYMX runner-up

2006

SW85cc BYMX champion SW85cc British Masters

champion

2007

BW85cc BSMA runner-up BW85cc BYMX fourth place



YOUTH ACES BATTLE IT OUT AT 2007 WESTON BEACH RACE BONANZA!

t is action a go-go as 290 youth racers take to

It is action a go-go as 290 youth racers take to the sands at the 25th Anniversary Weston Beach race.

The 65cc race is a classic with Callan Cooper and Ben Watson battling it out for the lead early on with Cooper easing ahead until disaster strikes with Callan crashing and then running out of fuel. Watson motors on to an easy win ahead of Corie Southwood and Cooper who has to push his bike back to the pits to refuel.

The mixed class 85cc race sees disaster strike for Josh Spinks whose bike breaks down when it looks like victory is in the bag. Josh's breakdown give Scott Elderfield the win after spending what seems like an eternity in the pits replacing a blown silencer.

Jake Milward and Scot Holcombe round out the top three in the overall race and the Big Wheel class while fourth is the first of the Small Wheel finishers, Jamie McCanney.



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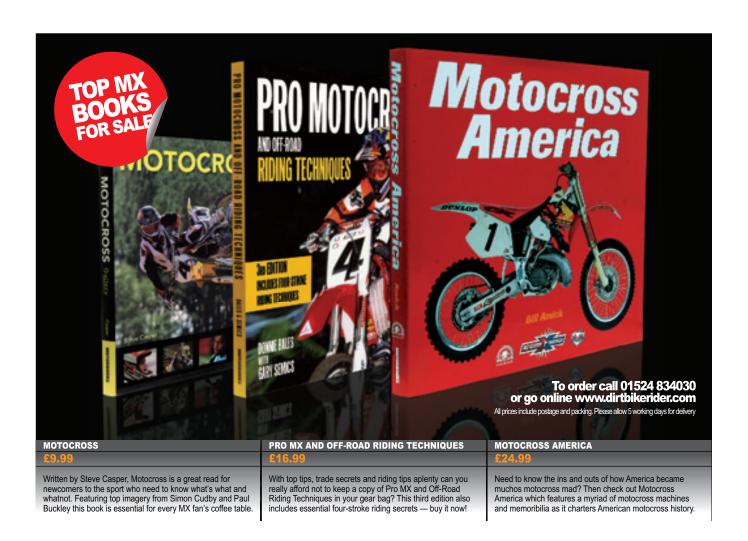
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STEPPINGUP!



S WHO ARE MAKING THE MOVE TO BIG BIKES..

and so is Alfie Smith

ith all the 2007 championships only having a handful of events left in the calendar it's time to look forward to next year with two riders who have big changes ahead of them for next year.

Sam Davis and Alfie Smith are taking the step from the Big Wheel 85 class to riding 250 four-stroke machines. We caught up with the dynamic duo at the fantastic new track that has been created at the Tonymoto facility near Winchester.

The track boasts an array of sections including supercross style jumps in a variety of conditions – sand, deep loamy soil and hardpack. Where better to put Sam and Alfie through their paces and find out their thoughts on what lies ahead...

Rage: So the time has come to move up to the big bikes – how long have you spent getting used to the size and power of the bigger machines?

AS: "I've been using a 125 two-stroke for the past two months but have only just got a 250F. I have ridden 250 four-strokes on and off for a while but this is the first time I have used one that I have owned."

SD: "To be honest not long. I only recently got a 250F and have spent little time riding it. During the winter I will be out on it getting ready and up to speed for the

Rage: So has the decision been made on what manufacturers' bike you'll be riding next year?

AS: "I'm unsure at the moment but I think we will be on the Kawasaki KXF for 2008."

SD: "No not yet. I'm busy riding all the brands and seeing what I get on with the best – whatever I ride I want the bike to suit me"

Rage: What championships will you be taking part in next year?

AS: "I hope to be doing the Elite Champs, the BYMX Premier and hope to get a ride in the Maxxis MXY2 class. To get in the Under 21s would be good but we will see what happens on that."

SD: "Pretty much the same as Alfie really. I hope to be taking part in the Under 21s, BYMX Premier and maybe the MXY2 that runs alongside the Maxxis. If there is a round after my birthday in September then I hope to be taking part in the MX2 class just to get a taste of what is needed to run with those riders. I'll be heading to Europe as much as possible too – it depends on how busy things get."

Rage: What will you miss about the smaller bikes and the championships you will be leaving behind?

SD: "I loved the small bike for the fact that you can just throw them around and jumps always feel so much bigger on the smaller bike. I won't really miss it too much as I am looking forward to the challenge. It's going to be a lot harder to get the good results."

AS: "Nothing. I am just looking forward to the future but as Sam says the little bikes are a lot of fun to throw around."

Rage: You must have loads of memories from your racing career so far – what would you say is you best memory?

AS: "Winning the BYMX in 2004 on the 65cc but I am sure there will be many good memories to come." SD: "I'd say winning the BYMX champs in '05 was probably the best so far but every win is memorable – it makes the training and the hard work so much more worthwhile."

Rage: Going into adult racing what do you think will be the hardest thing to get used to given the more aggressive nature of the racing?

AS: "I am a bit worried about being taken out as the riders will be bigger but I will learn quickly and in time it won't be a problem."

SD: "I just need to get on the pace and through the battles that I encounter I am sure I will learn to deal with anything they can throw at me."

Rage: We are here at the new Tonymoto track – is this type of track what's needed to get our riders up to speed on the bigger stuff and give the Brits a fighting chance against the American riders at events like the des Nations?

AS: "In America they have the supercross series and everything is on a bigger scale. We need to try and keep up with them so tracks like this are definitely useful. Some people complain about motocross becoming more and more like supercross but it is the way the sport is evolving and we need to be ready for it."

SD: "Definitely, finally there are tracks that can compare with what the Americans are used to riding day-in, day-out. It can only help the younger riders to get better. We have to move with the times and be riding what everyone else is riding, that way we will be able to go to places like the States and be ready for what they have install for us."

Rage: Well, we wish you luck on what will no doubt be a very exciting time for you both next year.



TRIALSTEASERS!

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panish trials bike manufacturer Gas Gas have released their 2008 range of trials bikes with the 50cc, 80cc and 125cc sized bikes of most interest to youth riders. The 125 is the stand-out bike of the bunch and there's also a super-trick red-framed Raga replica available for all you A and B Class hotshots. Check out www.gasgasuk.com for the full specifications, pricing info, dealer list and your chance to play the Gas Gas slots for free.

MAX

ALL THE YEARS OF PRACTISING IN THE SAND PAY OFF AS MERV'S LAD LIFTS THE DUTCH INTERNATIONAL TITLE

he team and I were back out to Holland for the fifth round of the international Dutch championship. The track was a little wet to start with but really fun. They only use the track once a year so no-one really knew what it was going to be like. Timed training was good. I was leading by four seconds up until the last five minutes when Jeffery Herlings just got pole. The track was really technical with deep ruts and I got some good clear runs so I really enjoyed it.

In the first moto I knew I had a lot of work to do now after going into the first turn nearly last. I slowly picked my way through the pack with the bike bogging at every opportunity! I eventually ended up sixth which was the best I could do considering the situation. Losing 15 points in the championship meant I only had a seven-point lead!

Things weren't going well so the doc decided to pull my second bike from the truck. We made some 'slight' adjustments – completely changing the rear end and suspension – and off I went...

I got a good jump and this time managed to hold onto about 10th into the first turn. I made my way through but when I got to second Jeffery had about 15 seconds on me. I worked double time to catch him and with a few more laps probably would have. I was seven seconds behind and now only had a two-point lead going into the last round at Mill.

We've done loads of training on my 125cc because my 85cc broke and Kawasaki didn't supply me with another one. I started to get a real feel for it and in the meantime we had a little surprise when Tommy Searle and Jamie Dobb came down on his factory bike. It was cool to have a ride with him until he went for a soil sample in the whoops on my SX track.

For four years I have been training and working in the sand and finally it paid off. It came down to two points between Jeffrey Herlings the Dutch Suzuki rider and me. My last race on a Kawasaki...I had to make it interesting! In timed training I did okay. Eventually I ended up fourth which was pretty good. The track was flat and they had changed it a bit since last year so it was all good fun.

In the first moto I got a good jump off the gate and quickly moved into the lead. About halfway through the race I made a little mistake on one of the corners and went down. Luckily I kept the bike running and only went back to second. It was all down to the last race. With Jeffrey taking the win in the first race it was whoever won the last race took the title!

I got another good jump and swiftly took the lead. With the track as rough as ever it was all down to fitness for the 25 minutes. Jeffrey stayed right there the whole race and put up the best fight I have ever had with him. It has always been me and Jeffrey ever since I first raced him at Velthoven in 2004 on the 65cc. I am sad that I am leaving Europe for a while but I will always come back when I've got a spare few weeks.

I'd like to take the opportunity now to say a big thanks to everyone who has supported and helped me through my time here in Europe. My team has been great to me especially Lionel and Martine who have always been there and always will be when I need help. All my fans for giving me that bit more when I needed it. All the guys who have come out to support me from England including my mum and dad. I'd like to say thanks to all my sponsors for giving me all the tools and gear I need to do the job and of course my school for supporting my programme...

It's a time for change and with an opportunity like I've got who'd say no? The future's bright, the future's orange!





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